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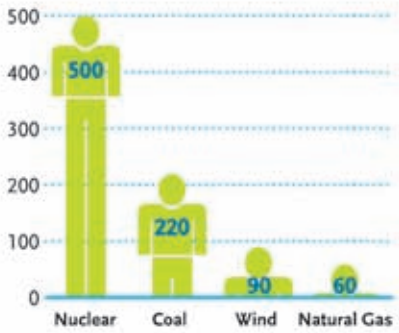

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THE NEW REPUBLIC

A Journal of Politics and the Arts

VOLUME 241 WASHINGTON, JUNE 24, 2010 NUMBER 4,885

Finish Strong

Going into the Senate debate over financial reform, a cynic would have offered the White House the following advice: Fight aggressively on the proposed consumer agency and settle for the appearance of reform on the rest of the bill. After all, most of us can understand the difference between a powerful new consumer watchdog and a token reshuffling of the bureaucracy. But few Americans grasp the difference between, say, strong derivatives regulations and weak ones. Which meant there was little political upside to facing down Wall Street on such issues, and plenty of campaign cash to lose.

To its credit, the administration resisted this temptation. Both publicly and behind the scenes, it insisted on reining in the market for derivatives—bets on the price movements of other assets, like stocks and bonds, which helped trigger AIG's collapse. It also worked hard to pass the so-called Volcker Rule, which would block some banks from placing risky bets for their own bottom line, known as proprietary trading. As a result, the bill the Senate approved last month was far tougher in many respects than what the House passed in December.

Over the next few weeks, members of the House and Senate will huddle to iron out their differences. It goes without saying that Wall Street will push for the weaker approach on each issue. What remains to be seen is how the administration will respond. Given the largely closed-door nature of the conference committee, administration pressure may be the only force capable of keeping the legislation intact and bolstering it where necessary. If the substance of the final bill falls short, it will likely be because the administration acceded. And it will be all the more objectionable for having occurred out of public view.

Take derivatives, a type of financial instrument that generates billions in profits each year for the country's biggest banks. During the boom, one kind of derivative—known as a credit default swap—allowed AIG to place huge bets on the real-estate market. As long as the market was rising, AIG pocketed gobs of revenue. But, when housing went belly-up, AIG was on the hook for billions in payouts. Unfortunately, it hadn't set aside much cash to cover this possibility, which meant the losses threatened not only the company itself, but everyone it had bet with. To mitigate this problem, the House and Senate have mandated that both sides of such contracts post collateral to a middleman known as a clearinghouse. The clearinghouse could then make a company's betting partners whole even if the company failed.

The big banks are understandably cool to this change—research by the IMF suggests the regulations could require hundreds of billions more in collateral. The banks have also resisted putting derivatives onto exchanges, which would boost transparency but slash the margins they make connecting buyers and sellers. In both cases, they've spent the last year prying open loopholes. The House bill contains a variety of them; the Senate version remarkably few.

The good news is that the administration has vowed to beat back exemptions. "We don't like carve-outs," one White House official told reporters on a recent call. The bad news is that the most emphatic of these pledges have come in the context of the consumer agency, the subject of the official's remark. We hope she and her administration colleagues are just as insistent when it comes to derivatives.

Likewise for the Volcker Rule, whose place on the conference committee table is even more precarious. The idea is to eliminate proprietary trading at banks that benefit from government support, such as federal deposit insurance, so that taxpayers don't have to cover what are essentially betting losses. The House bill doesn't include a bona fide Volcker-type measure; Senate Republicans blocked a relatively strict version put forth by Carl Levin and Jeff Merkley. The result was a mealy-mouthed provision that could give regulators the right to disregard key elements of the Volcker Rule.

In fairness, administration officials did labor to help craft the Levin-Merkley amendment. But they've since suggested that the weaker language could suffice. Even if true in principle, we don't share their optimism—the current statute has too many slippery phrases like "subject to … recommendations and modifications." We'd like to see the administration keep fighting.

All of which is to say that we're at another moment when the crass political play is obvious: The administration has rightly won acclaim for championing a tough bill in the Senate. Its reformist credentials established, there's little additional upside to finishing the job in conference. The problem is that, substantively, getting a strong bill only 90 percent of the way home is no better than pushing a weak bill from the get-go. The White House has rejected the cynics' advice so far; now would be a lousy time to heed it. ◆

David Cowles

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Cover illustration by Andrio Abero

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THE NEW REPUBLIC (ISSN 0028-6583), Vol. 241, Number 10, Issue 4,885, June 24, 2010. (Printed in the United States on June 2, 2010.) Published bi-weekly (except for skipped publication dates of January 21, March 4, April 22, August 5, August 26, September 16, October 7, November 25, December 16 & 23, 2010) at 1331 H Street, NW, Suite 700, Washington, D.C. 20005. Telephone (202) 508-4444. Yearly subscriptions, $79.97; foreign, $119.97 (U.S. funds); Canada, $99.97 (U.S. funds). Back issues, $8.00 domestic and $10.00 foreign/Canada (includes postage & handling).

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Dear Leader

The oil spill and the cult of the presidency.

JONATHAN CHAIT

Two years ago, the Cato Institute's Gene Healy wrote an insightful essay in *Reason* titled, "The Cult of the Presidency." Healy argued that the office of the president had assumed an almost supernatural place in American life. Not only had presidents assumed powers far beyond those originally intended—though I'd take exception to Healy's shrunken, nineteenth-century conception of the office's proper role—but the broader culture had also assigned it powers that go beyond the realm of politics itself. "The chief executive of the United States is no longer a mere constitutional officer charged with faithful execution of the laws," wrote Healy. "He is a soul nourisher, a hope giver, a living American talisman against hurricanes, terrorism, economic downturns, and spiritual malaise."

Healy could well have been writing about the curious reaction to President Obama's handling of the BP oil leak. Last week, Obama held a press conference putatively dedicated to explaining the state of the disaster and the government's response. The actual purpose of the event, as both the questioners and the questionee understood, was for Obama to perform his talismanic role.

Indeed, the assembled media judged the president's performance almost entirely in emotional terms. The initial reviews found him wanting. *New York Times* reporter Jeff Zeleny concluded, "[I]t remains an open question whether the measured tone that has become the soundtrack of Mr. Obama's presidency—a detached, calm, observational pitch—served to drive the point home that he is sufficiently enraged by the fury in the Gulf Coast." Maureen Dowd lambastes the president for having "willfully and inexplicably resisted fulfilling a signal part of his job: being a prism in moments of fear and pride, reflecting what Americans feel so they know he gets it."

The problem with this reaction is not that it is harsh. In a way, it is actually quite worshipful, in the literal sense of adopting the tone one takes toward a deity, albeit a deity one is currently questioning for his indifference. The assumption is that the primary variable here is not Obama's capacity to solve the problem but rather his interest in solving it.

TRB
From Washington

Yes, Obama said he wants to plug the hole. But did he *mean* it? We must know!

A similar assumption permeated the health care reform saga, which both the public and the news media thought of as a drama revolving around a single protagonist, the president. When health care seemed to be moving ahead in Congress, this reflected the brilliance of Obama's decision to allow Congress to take the lead, as opposed to Bill Clinton's presumed-fatal choice to craft a plan of his own. When it appeared stalled, the debate revolved around which tactical mistake on Obama's part could be to blame. Was he *too* deferential to Congress? Did he need to deliver another speech, and, if so, what kind? Or maybe he had spoken too often.

Nobody wanted to accept the reality that the veto point lay in the Senate, and that the primary mover was Nebraska Senator Ben Nelson, whom Obama could try to persuade but who would ultimately make up his own mind. If Obama made a concession to secure Nelson's support, disappointed liberals would rail at the president. It must have been that Obama didn't want, say, the public option badly enough. The scale of the disaster was too large for so small a character as Nelson to be its agent.

In the case of the BP disaster, the president's powers are assumed not only to surmount the separation of powers but even to extend to the limits of physics itself. The primary dynamic at work must be Obama's willpower.

To question the assumption of presidential omnipotence is not to absolve Obama of any responsibility. Some elements of the disaster clearly fall within the purview of executive action. Some critics have persuasively impugned the rapidity of Obama's efforts to mobilize containment of the spill. Others have, less persuasively, damned his failure to quickly reform the Minerals Management Service. (Reforming a dysfunctional culture takes time; consider Michelle Rhee's Battle of Stalingrad-esque struggle to remake D.C. public schools.)

But the cult of the presidency has made it impossible to differentiate between problems Obama can handle directly and those he can't. Obama has been bombarded with demands that he "take control" of plugging the leak through some unspecified rhetorical maneuver. Or, perhaps, that he just solve the problem himself. "I've been asked this week, 'Well, what does the president do to do a better job, you know, connecting on all this?'" says NBC's David Gregory, "You, you plug the leak, is what you do."

In reality, the federal government has no agency tasked with capping undersea oil leaks. All the necessary equipment, along with the expertise for operating it, resides with the private sector. Moreover, since BP will likely bear the full cost of the spill, it has every incentive to deploy its equipment as aggressively as possible. I have seen nobody even attempt to argue, in either practical or theoretical terms, that the government could do a better job of plugging the leak. The demand that Obama solve the problem is not an argument but an emotional state. To accept that Obama is not the man who will plug the hole or fail to do so would be like plunking down ten dollars to see *Superman* at the Cineplex only to watch Jimmy Olsen save the world.

Conservative critics have leapt upon the image of a hamstrung Obama to discredit the president and activist government. Both George Will and Charles Krauthammer recently cited Obama's 2008 speech promising that "the rise of the oceans [would begin] to slow." "Serves him right," snickered Will, who insists that the helplessness of government strikes at the core assumptions of "progressive politics." "[W]hen you anoint yourself King Canute, you mustn't be surprised when your subjects expect you to command the tides," gloats Krauthammer.

Of course, neither Obama nor liberals in general believe that government has limitless powers or responsibilities. Obama's promise to slow the rise of the oceans was not a claim of godlike powers. It was a specific promise to reduce carbon-dioxide emissions, one measurable effect of which is the rise of worldwide sea levels. This is a task well within the purview of government. The intellectual task of liberalism is not to make government responsible for everything. It is to rationally determine which things cannot be handled by the private sector. No less than the dogmatic anti-statism of the right, the cult of the presidency is an enemy of that task. ◆

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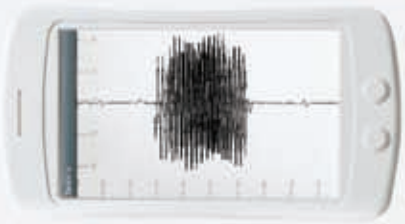

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Paleo Wacko

The roots of Rand Paul's radicalism.

In 1984, Ron Paul ran for the United States Senate. It was an audacious gamble. Paul, who represented Texas's twenty-second congressional district, had to give up his safe House seat to compete in the state's Republican Senate primary. What's more, his chief opponent was Phil Gramm who, despite having recently switched from being a Democrat, had the support of Texas's GOP establishment. And, while Paul's unusual brand of far–right-wing politics—he was for returning to the gold standard and against a federal holiday for Martin Luther King Jr.—was a good fit for his congressional district near Houston, it was a tougher sell elsewhere, even in Texas. "It wasn't often that Phil could portray himself as part of the mainstream," recalls political consultant John Weaver, who worked on Gramm's campaign, "but, thanks to Dr. Paul he was able to do that." In the end, Paul's gamble backfired. He lost the Senate primary, receiving only 17 percent of the vote, and went off into the political wilderness, not returning to the U.S. House for another 13 years.

But Paul's disastrous Senate campaign did achieve one thing: It served as the political coming-out party for his son Rand. The third of Paul's five children, Rand had been an avid student of his father's political teachings. "As a young lad, he sat at his father's knee and learned all he could," says longtime Ron Paul campaign aide Jean McIver. By the time he got to Baylor University, Rand was a font of small-government dogma, conversant on the evils of the Federal Reserve and a floating currency. "Rand was pretty much a carbon copy of his dad," recalls John Green, who belonged to a Baylor secret society called the NoZe Brotherhood with Rand. "He started drinking the Kool-Aid at an early age." So, in 1984, when Ron Paul was called back to Washington for a House vote and had to miss a scheduled joint appearance with Gramm, he turned to his 21-year-old son to fill in for him. In front of 300 people, Rand Paul gave his first political speech. "I listened to him pretty closely," says Gramm, "and I remember the young man did quite well."

The speech did not immediately launch Rand Paul on a political career. A few months later, he started medical school at Duke University (where Ron, who was a practicing ob-gyn before going into politics, also got his medical degree) and eventually went on to become an ophthalmologist in Bowling Green, Kentucky. But his devotion to his father—and to his father's politics—never waned. Over the years, he continued to pitch in on his father's campaigns, none more so than Ron Paul's 2008 presidential bid, for which Rand traveled to ten states and appeared on hundreds of radio shows on his father's behalf. This year, Rand decided to make his own audacious gamble and run for the U.S. Senate from Kentucky. Like his father in 1984, Rand found himself competing in the Republican primary against a former Democrat who nonetheless had the support of the state's GOP establishment. But, unlike his father's gamble, Rand's paid off. After beating Trey Grayson in the GOP primary on May 18, Paul is now the odds-on favorite to win the general election in November. If he does, he would become perhaps the most ideologically radical senator in U.S. history.

Would Rand Paul be the most radical senator in recent history?

Ron and Rand Paul are often described as libertarians, but their politics represent a distinct—and peculiar—strand of libertarianism known as paleolibertarianism. While libertarians and paleolibertarians both start from the same limited-government premise, paleolibertarians take that ideology in a decidedly populist, right-wing direction. Paleolibertarians' enemy

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is not just big government, as the leading paleolib thinker Murray Rothbard explained in a 1992 essay (unearthed by *Reason* reporters Julian Sanchez and David Weigel in 2008), but rather, the "unholy alliance of 'corporate liberal' Big Business and media elites, who, through big government, have privileged and caused to rise up a parasitic Underclass, who, among them all, are looting and oppressing the bulk of the middle and working classes in America."

Paleolibertarianism's intellectual hub is an Alabama-based think tank called the Ludwig von Mises Institute, which Rothbard helped found in 1982. (Rothbard had studied under its namesake, a famous Austrian libertarian economist.) Another one of the von Mises Institute's founders, and its current chairman, is Lew Rockwell, who served as Ron Paul's congressional chief of staff from 1978 to 1982 and remained one of his top advisers for years afterward. Rockwell, who has frequently brought the von Mises Institute into alliance with neo-Confederate groups such as the League of the South, has written in favor of racial separatism; and, in 2008, after The New Republic's James Kirchick discovered numerous racist, homophobic, and anti-Semitic passages in Ron Paul's old newsletters, *Reason*'s Sanchez and Weigel reported that Rockwell was their likely author. (Rockwell has denied this.)

Ron Paul has served as a "distinguished counselor" at the von Mises Institute, which has published his books. And, while Rand Paul has never had any formal associations with the organization, it's clear that its leaders have played a key role in his intellectual development. "I tell people when they ask me if I know Lew Rockwell that I used to ride to work with Lew Rockwell and Ron Paul back in the late 1970s, maybe early 1980s," Rand told Rockwell in a radio interview last year, "and I got to hear all kinds of great conversations on the way to work about philosophy, politics, religion, you name it, and I guess I was always very, very interested in that." Similarly, in a videocast Paul did lamenting the fact that he never met Ayn Rand, he said, "One of the ones I was lucky enough to meet through the years was Murray Rothbard, and, when he came to speak to interns in the early 1980s in Washington, I was privileged enough to drive him back to the airport and got to talk to him about things."

Their influence on Rand Paul is readily apparent today. From his (now retracted) opposition to the 1964 Civil Rights Act to his claim that passage of cap-and-trade legislation will lead to the creation of "an army of armed EPA agents, thousands of them," Paul, like his father, exhibits all the hallmarks of a paleolibertarian—including an affection for conspiracy theories. In 2008, for instance, while campaigning in Montana for his father's presidential bid, Paul gave voice to a loony idea—shared by his father—about the construction of a NAFTA superhighway and the creation of a single currency, the Amero, for a North American Union. "It's gonna go up through Texas, I guess, all the way to Montana," Paul said of the superhighway. "So, it's a real thing, and, when you talk about it, the thing you just have to be aware of is that, if you talk about it like it's a conspiracy, they'll paint you as a nut. It's not a conspiracy. They're out in the open about it. I saw the YouTube of Vicente Fox talking about the Amero. . . . I guarantee you it's one of their long-term goals to have one sort of borderless, mass continent."

None of this should be surprising. Having learned his politics at his father's knee, Paul has had no opportunities since those early days to unlearn them. While Paul's professional life as an ophthalmologist has presumably exposed him to many things, his political life—dedicated as it has been, until now, to his father's career—has been spent entirely inside his father's suffocatingly cramped paleolibertarian universe. "He lives in an information bubble," says Chip Berlet, who studies right-wing movements for Political Research Associates.

The Senate, of course, has not been immune to radical ideologues. In 1895, South Carolina sent the white supremacist "Pitchfork" Ben Tillman to Washington. From 1935 to 1947, one of Mississippi's senators was Theodore Bilbo, a member of the Ku Klux Klan. And the 30 long years Jesse Helms spent as a North Carolina senator put something of a dent in the Senate's self-image as the world's most deliberative body. And yet, these ideologues were, for their times and places, depressingly not that radical—as they represented widely held beliefs among their constituents. Paul does not.

In a way, he would be better situated in the House of Representatives, which has always had its share of radical members, from Mississippi's John Rankin in the middle of the twentieth century to Michele Bachmann today to, well, Ron Paul. By winning a Senate primary—which his father was never able to do—Rand Paul has made family history. Now, he stands poised to make a bigger sort of history as well.

Jason Zengerle

ANTHONY RUSSO

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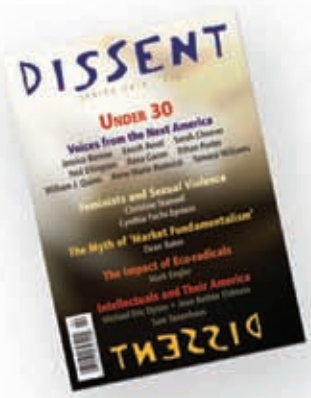

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Oh Brother

An epic, empty Labour power struggle.

Two days after the British general election, Alan Watkins died. He was the doyen of London political columnists, after nearly half a century of writing weekly, wisely, and wittily about Parliament, and the Tories (his book, *A Conservative Coup*, is the best account of the fall of Margaret Thatcher), but, above all, the Labour Party, which he knew intimately. Since he died, I've often wished I could ask Alan what he thought about the latest contest for the Labour leadership.

This was the first election since 1974 in which no party gained an absolute parliamentary majority. It seemed likely that some kind of pact would be reached between David Cameron's Conservatives, who had the largest number of seats, and Nick Clegg's Liberal Democrats, until the electrifying news on the following Monday that there might be a deal instead between Labour and the Lib Dems to keep the ruling party in power. But this proved to be a last flick of the dying serpent's tail, in the form of those backstairs wheeler-dealers, Alastair Campbell and Peter Mandelson. By Tuesday evening, Cameron was on his way to Buckingham Palace to kiss hands with the Queen, in the sonorous phrase, having agreed on terms for a coalition with Clegg; and Brown had resigned with some modicum of dignity after announcing the day before that he would quit the leadership of the Labour Party.

A number of candidates have now declared themselves to succeed him. The electoral procedure is complex, and the result won't be announced until the party conference in September, but we have a field of three front-runners, who were all cabinet ministers in the outgoing government. David Miliband was foreign secretary, his younger brother Ed Miliband was the energy and climate-change secretary, and Ed Balls was secretary of state for "children, schools, and families"—an Orwellian name that the new government has mercifully dropped, reverting to "education." (If anyone thinks it's a little confusing to have two candidates sharing a surname and two sharing a forename, I cannot disagree.)

Other hats have been thrown in the ring, notably by Diane Abbott, who has more than one selling proposition: Unlike the others, she isn't male and she isn't white. She's the daughter of working-class Jamaican immigrants and was a relentless left-wing critic of the Blair and Brown governments, on questions from Iraq to civil liberties.

She also has no chance of winning, not least because the odds are deliberately stacked against her and other potential outsiders. Before nominations close, a candidate must secure the backing of 12.5 percent of the parliamentary party, which now means 33 Labour MPs, no easy task and not meant to be. Even so, and, even though this is meant to favor the party establishment, it must be disconcerting to David, Ed, and Ed to find a poll revealing that Abbott is the most popular candidate among the British public.

The Miliband brothers' sibling rivalry extends to Labour's leadership fight.

Our new prime minister was educated at Eton and Oxford, his deputy at Westminster and Cambridge, two ancient public schools (English-style) and universities. But then, these Labour men are not so dissimilar in generation and formation. Balls is 43 (the same age as both Cameron and Clegg), the Milibands are 44 and 40. Both brothers went to Oxford, as did Balls, before he proceeded to Harvard. All three belong to our New Class of apparatchiks, or, at any rate, they worked as researchers and aides before being elected to Parliament. What they have in common as professional politicians transcends any ideological distinctions, and there is frankly little to differentiate them in terms of policy.

Or one thing only: the legacy of Blair and his commitment of British forces to Iraq. Both the Eds have railed against the war, while David refuses to repudiate it, saying, "it's time to move on." But then, it's easier for them than for him. Just as Barack Obama, unlike Hillary Clinton, wasn't in the Senate to make a difficult choice when the war began, so neither Ed was in Parliament, leaving them uncompromised by having voted in favor, as David is. All of the candidates are uneasily aware how much of the New Labour record the electorate finds distasteful, from the uncritical support for the Bush administration to the equally uncritical adulation of high finance to the creation of a CCTV-surveillance state. But, for those who loyally served the last government, it's hard now to repudiate it entirely without seeming opportunistic and hypocritical.

Once upon a time, Labour leadership contests were clear-cut fights between left and right, such as Aneurin Bevan against Hugh Gaitskell in 1955. After Harold Wilson and then James Callaghan became party leaders and prime ministers, Callaghan was defeated by Thatcher in the 1979 election, and he resigned the leadership the following year. By then, Labour was riven by the attempted takeover from a crypto-Trotskyist left and the fraudulent sham-democrat Anthony Wedgwood Benn, formerly Lord Stansgate, latterly transmogrified as "Tony Benn."

It looked, nevertheless, as though Denis Healey, on the social-democratic right, would become leader, until Watkins achieved one of the scoops of his career, and one of the best bets. He sent a telegram—it was that long ago!—to Michael Foot asking his intentions, and Foot duly declared his candidature. The

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affable if ineffectual figurehead of the romantic old left, Foot was a writer and book collector who had been an MP, on and off, since 1945. Watkins had already asked me (a more seasoned punter, if not always a successful one) to find out the bookmakers' odds. They gave Foot no serious chance, offering 14 to one, but Alan knew that, for various reasons to do with internal Labour politics, his prospects were far better than that. We both bet on him, and he narrowly beat Healey on a second ballot, while two scribblers drank champagne on the proceeds. Oh, and, in the 1983 election, Foot led Labour to its worst defeat since World War II.

The leadership contest that elevated Foot was the last to be decided by Labour MPs alone. Where the Bennite left won out was in replacing that admirably simple system with an "electoral college," in which MPs would have 30 percent of the votes, the party members 30 percent, and the trade unions 40 percent. (The weighting has since been changed to allot each sector an even third.) This bizarre hybrid makes elections difficult to call, especially now that genuine party membership is so small and the unions' intentions so obscure. Moreover, the alternative vote is used, and it's reckoned that "second preferences" will favor Ed Miliband. David started as a heavy favorite, but the kid brother's odds have considerably improved over the past few weeks.

More interesting than the brothers' policies is their background. A somewhat overheated recent effusion in *The New York Times Book Review* by Harold Bloom (ostensibly a review of Anthony Julius's book, *Trials of the Diaspora*) claimed that England was the hotbed of savage anti-Semitism it had always been. Among a number of spirited letters to the editor, one American observer noted that, if Bloom had watched the BBC coverage of our election, he would have heard from such leading British (and, as it happens, Jewish) politicians as, on the Conservative side, Michael Howard, Sir Malcolm Rifkind, and Oliver Letwin or, for Labour, Lord Mandelson—and the Miliband brothers. Their father, the Marxist writer and political theorist Ralph Miliband, was an émigré who settled in England and became an oracle of the intellectual New Left. David has said wryly that he imagines his late father contemplating his boys' careers and asking, "What did I do wrong?"

ANTHONY RUSSO

The answer is that they were both caught up in the spirit of the age, the correct recognition that traditional state socialism had run its course not only on the imploded eastern Leninist model but in its gentler British version. And yet, as the careerists forged their careers, they failed to notice just how far and how fast Blair was moving to the right. Ed Miliband says that David is "my best friend," and they have naturally refrained from open mutual abuse, though that still raises the question of what unconscious fratricidal passion leads Ed to try and ruin that friend.

Whoever wins will have a hard task ahead. Ralph Miliband's Marxism is a memory, traditional socialism is dead, and even moderate social democracy is in poor shape. But that doesn't explain the astonishing transformation of New Labour into what is, by historical standards, a party of the center-right, which, now that it has lost power, looks even more of a moral wreck. Not long before Blair won his first election, Alan Watkins wrote that, although the party had gone along with Blair in the hope of avoiding yet another defeat, the truth was that, in their hearts, most Labour MPs hated what he was doing to their party. By now, that cynical bargain has finally corroded the party.

Not only has everyone observed for some time that Clegg's party now stands to the left of Labour—which is why the old radical Watkins cast a postal vote for the Lib Dems from his deathbed—but even the Tories seem more liberal than Blairite Labour in many respects. Cameron has said he will get tough on the wilder excesses of hedge-fund speculation, and he has won plaudits from civil liberties groups by promising to scrap Labour plans for compulsory ID cards and police DNA banks.

Our unlikely coalition government has been embraced by a solid majority of the electorate, and, in any case, the crushing defeat at the ballot box on May 6, when Labour won only 29 percent of the popular vote, leaves the party Blair, Brown, Mandelson, and Campbell created without even its ultimate justification of electoral success and the fruits of office. The leadership contest might afford Labour the opportunity to debate whether today it has any remaining purpose. If not, whoever is declared the winner in September might be looking at a very long stretch as the leader of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition.

GEOFFREY WHEATCROFT

Geoffrey Wheatcroft's books include THE STRANGE DEATH OF TORY ENGLAND *and* YO, BLAIR!

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THE NEW REPUBLIC (ISSN 0028-6583), Vol. 241, Number 10, Issue 4,885, June 24, 2010. (Printed in the United States on June 2, 2010.) Published bi-weekly (except for skipped publication dates of March 4, April 22, August 5, August 26, September 16, October 7, November 25, and December 16 & 23, 2010) at 1331 H Street, NW, Suite 700, Washington, D.C. 20005. Telephone (202) 508-4444. Yearly subscriptions, $79.97; foreign, $119.97 (U.S. funds); Canada, $99.97 (U.S. funds). Back issues, $8.00 domestic and $10.00 foreign/Canada (includes postage & handling). © 2010 by TNR II, LLC. Periodicals postage paid at Washington, D.C., and additional mailing offices. Rights and permissions: fax (202) 204-4871. Indexed in Readers' Guide, Media Review Digest. For hard copy reprints, call (202) 508-4444. Microform, Canadian Periodical Index, and CD-ROM are available through ProQuest, 300 N. Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106. Telephone (800) 521-0600. Postmaster: Send changes of address to The New Republic, P.O. Box 15818, North Hollywood, CA 91615-5818. Member, BPA Worldwide. Send letters and unsolicited manuscripts to letters@tnr.com. Poetry submissions must be e-mailed to poetry@tnr.com. **For subscription inquiries or problems call (800) 827-1289 or visit our website at *www.tnr.com/subscriber-services.***

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THE WORLD CUP

Dunga, Diego, and Destiny

A guide to the tournament narratives.

ALEKSANDAR HEMON

Anastasia Vasilakis

The World Cup is but a couple of weeks away, and, if you are not trembling with anticipation, now is the time to start. There has never been a World Cup like the one about to take place in nine South African cities: For the first time ever, the greatest soccer tournament is being held in Africa. Soccer, an essentially populist game—requiring but a stretch of reasonably flat ground, a round, kickable object, and anything as goal posts—has long been part of daily life in Africa, but now, African soccer will be smack in the center of the world stage.

The continent will be represented by six national teams full of world-class talent: Algeria, Cameroon, Ghana, Ivory Coast, Nigeria, and the host, South Africa. The talented players who have been mercilessly exported—often at cut-rate price—are coming back home, and one should reasonably expect the African teams to reach new heights. (No African team has placed higher in a World Cup than Cameroon in 1990: They heartbreakingly lost their quarterfinal game against England in overtime.)

Indeed, if the experience of the 2002 tournament in South Korea and Japan is anything to go by, the South African team—which is playing Mexico in the opening game on June 11—will be carried by the home fans' euphoria and some flexible refereeing. Should they falter, the home fans' support will doubtless be transferred to one of the other teams. Ivory Coast is the best in the African lot, what with superstars like Didier Drogba, Salomon Kalou, and the Touré brothers. But, besides being in a difficult group with Brazil and Portugal, they have the bad luck of being coached by the imagination and courage-free Sven Göran Eriksson, the former England coach. Despite Eriksson's joy-killing shadow, the Brazil–Ivory Coast game on June 20 promises to be one of the highlights of the tournament.

When the preliminary World Cup squads were announced not so long ago, soccer lovers (and bookies) intensified the foreplay consisting of delicious prophecies and baseless punditry, whereby whimsical assessments of the teams traveling to South Africa are dispensed with impudence. No one, however, with any knowledge of soccer would be crazy enough to exclude Brazil from the short list of favorites. Nonetheless, the trepidation of many a Brazilian fan is focused on the coach, Dunga, who could not care less about placating the nervous fan. Thus, he included neither the perpetually grinning Ronaldinho, who had a decent season with AC Milan, or the ever unpredictable Adriano. Dunga—which is Portuguese for "dopey"—is not given to fancy footwork and artistry, habitually expected from Brazilians and practiced by Ronaldinho and his samba ilk. As a crucial member of the 1994 Brazilian team, which won the World Cup held in the United States, Dunga was the midfield enforcer and played in a way that was considered thuggish and boring—an insult to soccer, according to the Brazilian press and fans. Dunga's squad plays much as he used to; they're tough, tactically disciplined, and very hard to score against. Focusing on defense and midfield, Dunga's team will rely on breaking up the other team's play and counterattacking at the blistering speed provided by Sevilla's Luís Fabiano and/or Kaká, even if his first season with Real Madrid was middling at best. Brazil unfussily qualified for South Africa, and one should expect unspectacular consistency from Dunga's team, which might easily take them all the way. But, if they fail to do so, expect Dunga's effigies to be burned all across Brazil.

A sad fact of human existence is that an average life seldom contains more than 20 World Cups.

Spectacular inconsistency, on the other hand, is the story of Argentina and, indeed, their coach's life. Diego Armando Maradona, arguably the greatest player of all time, became the national team coach in November 2008, after a tumultuous period in his life that included a gastric bypass surgery, a stint in drug rehab, a heart attack, and befriending Fidel Castro. During his reign, Maradona managed to call up more than 70 different players, lose 6-1 to the normally hapless Bolivia (which equaled the worst loss in Argentina's history), and wreck the nerves of the jittery nation by waiting until injury time to beat lowly Peru in a decisive game, which he celebrated by sliding on his considerable belly along the rain-deluged pitch. The place in South Africa was not ensured for Lionel Messi (hands-down the best player in the world) and his stellar compatriots until the eighty-fourth minute of

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the last qualification game against Uruguay. In the post-game press conference, feeling vindicated by the success, Maradona graciously told the press corps "to suck it and keep sucking it," and he was subsequently suspended by FIFA for two months, following which his dog bit his face. Maradona's instability—some would be tempted to call it insanity—is visible in his team selection: the unbalanced defense, marked by the presence of chronic blunderers like Coloccini and aging players like Demichelis; the uneven midfield, short on passers (except for the aged Verón, who was lazy at his peak), inexplicably devoid of Inter's Zanetti and Cambiasso, who carried Inter to Champions League victory and are the kind of players Dunga dreams about; and a set of blindingly brilliant forwards: "Kun" Agüero, Higuaín, Tévez, Milito, and, the greatest of all, Lionel Messi. Among the five of them they scored more than 150 goals this season, Messi alone scoring 47. Typically, Maradona was compelled to bring along another forward, Martín Palermo, who will celebrate his thirty-seventh birthday this year and whose main, and possibly only, quality is that he still plays for Boca Juniors, the club particularly dear to the coach's heart. Maradona's penchant for the spectacular and farcical, coupled with a complete absence of tactical acumen (which made it very hard for Messi to score for the national team) makes Argentina a very long shot for the world champion title. But then … Maradona's life is nothing if not a series of what-ifs inexplicably becoming reality. So: What if the team miraculously clicks together and the front line starts scoring according to its fantastic abilities? It's a painfully titillating possibility.

If Argentina indeed overcomes the chaos in Maradona's head and progresses deeper into the competition, it might run into Spain, the reigning European champions. Spain's midfield is beyond awesome: Xavi, Andrés Iniesta, Cesc Fàbregas, Xabi Alonso, and David Silva, while its firepower is not at all inconsiderable in David Villa and Fernando Torres. The Spaniards have the advantage of having handily won the 2008 European Championship with the same core players. A brilliant generation has come of age, managing to overcome entirely the fear of success that had paralyzed many a talented Spanish team. But, to advance in the tournament, they might have to beat Italy, the reigning world champions, which they had quite a hard time doing in Euro 2008. The Italians lost on penalties, and it was by far the hardest game for the Spaniards.

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The 2010 Italian team is led again by the genius of Marcello Lippi, who took them to the top of the world in 2006. His squad has aged considerably, consisting almost entirely of players who play in Italy's Serie A—only the New Jersey–born Giuseppe Rossi plays in Spain. Lippi unsentimentally failed to call up Francesco Totti and the 2006 World Cup hero Fabio Grosso and has plenty of confidence in his team—anyone who is foolish enough to underestimate the Italians will do so at their peril. Few expected them to win last time, and, the next thing you knew, my barber was paying a nice chunk of money to hang the Italian national jersey, signed by all the world champion players, on the wall of his Chicago barbershop.

A touch of Italian magic might help England finally live up to the collective delusion that is usually triggered by their appearance in the World Cup—the British press and beer-soaked fans usually expect a shot at the title, only to witness a self-inflicted shot in the foot. Fabio Capello, their capable Italian coach, led them through a nearly flawless qualification campaign—they won all their games except the last, irrelevant match against Ukraine—and has instilled self-confidence that, during Sven Göran Eriksson's hapless mandate, was simultaneously overpronounced and fragile, always a sure symptom of a delusion-of-grandeur infection. England's problem is, as always, a short bench. The current squad is entirely dependent on Rio Ferdinand and John Terry in the back, Frank Lampard and Steven Gerrard in the midfield, and Wayne Rooney up in front. If any of them goes down with an injury—and they're all hurting considerably after a long and demanding season—Capello's options are substantially limited.

The beauty of the World Cup (and life, for that matter) is that few things turn out the way you expect. Germany and France are impressive on paper but have, for years now, been playing haphazardly, nowhere near their reputation. Still, they should be reckoned with. Brazil might have to get by the unpredictable Netherlands, while Serbia, Chile, and the United States—who knows!—might spoil some already scheduled celebration parties.

Life is too short to miss any games to be played this summer in South Africa. A sad fact of human existence is that an average life seldom contains more than 20 World Cups—our games are tragically numbered.

Aleksandar Hemon is the author of The Lazarus Project *and* Love and Obstacles.

My Father's Game

Has YouTube ruined soccer? A memoir.

DANIEL ALARCÓN

Like most, if not all boys growing up in 1950s Arequipa, Peru, my father Renato was obsessed with fútbol; unlike many of his peers, he was as passionate about calling the game as he was about playing it. He went to the stadium every Sunday with my grandfather, and, at halftime, he would wander toward the press box, peek in, and try to overhear the commentary. The radio men impressed him; they were never at a loss for words. On Mondays, the local newspapers would print diagrams of the previous day's goal-scoring sequences, and my father would study these, recalling the plays as he'd seen them and thinking how he might have narrated the lead-up, the shot, the goalkeeper's futile dive, and the ball hitting the back of the net. At night, he'd fall asleep calling games in his head, matches starring his heroes, the local boys of FBC Melgar or El Piérola or Alianza San Isidro. He spent his Saturdays at the field behind the school, holding a microphone wired to a tinny speaker, narrating the scrimmages between the various grades. Here, he began to make his reputation, using his voice to add a certain glamor to what otherwise would have been ordinary neighborhood games. The players responded to his baroque and quick-witted descriptions of the unfolding match and elevated their game accordingly.

Soon, my father was performing at local talent shows, including once before a sold-out audience at the municipal theater in Mollendo, a beach town a few hours from Arequipa. For the occasion, he improvised an imaginary game between his beloved Melgar and Universitario, hated rivals from the capital, Lima. When, in his recreation of the invented match, Melgar scored, the gathered crowd cheered and celebrated just as enthusiastically as if the goal had been real. My father recalls observing the audience, some 300 shouting men, women, and children on their feet, and not quite believing the scene. People were embracing, clapping. "¡Golazo!" He stepped from the stage and was met by his uncle, Juan Castor, overcome with pride, weeping.

If this all sounds far-fetched, one must recall how the sport was experienced in the days before the arrival of television, before ubiquitous replays and streaming match highlights were available on the Internet. In early 1950s Peru, either you were at the stadium, watching the game yourself, or you were picturing it in your mind's eye, inspired by the able call of a radio announcer. You were trained to be able to see it, to imagine it. Soccer is not easy to narrate, of course, complicated by its large field, its speed, its un-

My father had a gift for calling games. His career began at age 14.

COURTESY OF THE AUTHOR

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predictability. The best players are often those who move in the most unexpected ways, those creatives who roam far out of position when their instinct demands it. How to describe a deft pass with the outside of the foot done at full speed, or a defender losing his balance, fooled by a subtle, almost imperceptible feint of the hips? And even this is only part of the challenge: Any description of a game for radio had to be both precise and global. You narrated the play itself, but also what might come next: not only who had the ball, but also where his teammates were in relation, his opponents, the shifting array of options.

I've thought a lot about that night at the municipal theater. Perhaps it's impossible to re-create the innocence of a crowd that could cheer wildly as a child stood onstage describing an imaginary match, an imaginary goal. These are different times. Goals, as a currency, have been devalued, of course. In 2010, you can watch them all day long—goals scored in the leagues of Japan or Belgium or Paraguay or Ghana; goals scored off volleys, headers, own goals, goals that feel like accidents or works of art, or somewhere in between. You can feed yourself an endless diet of scoring, but this is so far from the game my father played and fell in love with as a boy—so far from the game he narrated—that it is completely unrecognizable. That night, my father convinced the audience that the match he was describing was real; and, in a real match, goals are the exception, and almost always a surprise. The crowd erupted, celebrating this concocted goal for a simple reason. He had them so enthralled with the game that they hadn't expected it.

My father was a student of the art of calling soccer, and everyone knew he had a gift. It wasn't long before he was being invited up to the stadium press box on Sundays; occasionally, they even gave the kid a mic. In 1956, the legendary announcer Óscar Soto Solis left Arequipa to try his luck in the capital; and Radio Continental, the most powerful station in southern Peru, was suddenly without its emblematic voice. Within months, they'd found a successor: my father. In the space of two years, he'd gone from calling neighborhood games to imaginary matches to being live on the air from Melgar Stadium every Sunday. He was only 14.

My father kept his job at Radio Continental for four years, until his studies became too demanding. It was in 1960 that Soto Solis returned from Lima—the hometown legend never had much success in the capital. This was the right moment for my father to step away. The veteran announcer took back his old spot, and my father dedicated his full attention to college.

Naturally, when I hear my old man's radio stories, I get nostalgic for something I never experienced. Hearing a game on the radio may not be richer than watching it on television, but there's no question that these are two different experiences. A well-called match on the radio will allow you to see parts of the game you wouldn't pay attention to otherwise. A good announcer will notice for you—the spacing between midfielders, a goalie dangerously off his line, a frustrated striker waiting impatiently for a ball.

By the time television had arrived in Arequipa, my father had already moved to the capital to continue his education. I asked him about it, not too long ago; about this transition, its effect on the game, and on the imaginations of fans. Was something lost?

My father thought about it, but not long. After all, he loved the sport. He loved being near the action. And he was, more than anything else, supremely confident in his ability to transmit that love, no matter the medium: "If there'd been television at the time," he said, "then of course, I would've been on television."

Daniel Alarcón is the author of the novel Lost City Radio, *winner of the 2009 International Literature Award. His most recent book,* The Secret Miracle, *was published in April.*

Freedom From Quant

Soccer versus Moneyball.

FRANKLIN FOER

There's a new master narrative for the history of sports. And it goes like this: We have only just begun to emerge from the superstitious dark ages, where coaches clung to folk wisdom, into the enlightened world of data. The Copernicus and Galileo of sports' scientific revolution are the statistician Bill James and the Oakland Athletics general manager Billy Beane. They have reduced the mysteries of baseball prowess to a sequence of previously ignored data, the new discipline of sabermetrics, uncovering the hidden formulas for understanding the game.

The fact that Beane—and not a player for the ages—is the great hero of this past decade's most influential sports book, *Moneyball*, perfectly captures our era. Our society has grown devoted to what *The New York Times Magazine* recently termed "the data-driven life." Thanks to technological advances, we now swim in ever-deeper pools of stats. We have the capacity to measure every human twitch and an increasingly confident sense of our ability to deploy algorithms and regression analyses to make rational decisions, on everything from choosing the perfect neighborhood to the perfect mate. Yet, for all our faith in this statistical revolution and all the benefits it has yielded in certain fields, there's one realm, or at least one sport, that remains stubbornly, beautifully immune.

Marxism attempted to discern the scientific basis for history—and it was the Soviet Union that first attempted to unlock the scientific basis for soccer. The grand theoretician of this approach was a Ukrainian named Valeri Lobanovsky. In high school, before signing up for the local soccer club, he had displayed mathematical acumen, winning a gold medal in the subject—and went on to study heat engineering at the Kiev Polytechnic Institute, even as he played professionally. It was at the Polytechnic in the early '60s that he arrived at his epiphany that the cybernetic techniques and other methodology he encountered in the classroom could revolutionize his sport.

In the schematic he invented, the game could be broken into 22 component tasks, what he called "actions" and "coalition actions." He would dispatch analysts to tally each of these actions—forward passes, backward passes, tackles—and then feed these numbers into a computer to evaluate his players. He also recruited a young academic, Professor Anatoly Zelentsov, to run the "laboratory" at their club, Dynamo Kiev. As Zelentsov explained his task: "In my laboratory, we evaluate the functional readiness of players and how their potential can best be realized. And we influence players in a natural way—we form them following scientific recommendations."

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It was pseudoscience. But even pseudoscientists have great insights. Lobanovsky-coached teams used well-coordinated pressing and superior stamina to swarm opposing players with the ball. During the 1970s, Lobanovsky's teams twice won the European Cup-Winners' Cup. But he also ultimately ruined Ukrainian soccer—or, at least, his less sophisticated, less charismatic disciples did. The national game is now characterized by players running and tackling frenetically. They rush to complete the actions that the computers reward, no matter their ultimate efficacy. It is ugly, and, judging by the Ukrainian performance on the international stage, not terribly effective.

Outside the Soviet Union, Lobanovsky's lab-based approach never caught on. But the quest to find the mathematical underpinnings for soccer continues. There are powerful computer programs—Opta, ProZone—that track how far players run in the course of a game, how many times they touch the ball, and how many times a player is involved in an attack leading to a shot. While these analytics have proved useful to scouting and buying talent, they haven't reshaped the game in the same way that sabermetrics have transformed baseball. Or, as Simon Kuper and Stefan Szymanski put it in their book *Soccernomics*, "Now soccer is due its own [Bill] Jamesian revolution."

Yet, after many years of academic papers, the game is nowhere close to that kind of revolutionary state. In part, this is a product of soccer's cultural hostility to data, particularly plied in the service of making rational purchases of talent. (The biggest clubs are often run by oligarchs, either Russian or Emirati, who don't care about managing the financial risks of their player purchases; or, in the case of FC Barcelona and Real Madrid, by presidents who are democratically elected by fans and pander to the masses.) But the problem isn't just the culture of the game; it's the game itself. Soccer has never really had box scores or batting averages or any of the rudimentary statistics that James and Beane have rebelled against. On a profound level, soccer is immune to rigorous statistical analysis, at least compared to baseball and basketball. There is no single controlled variable—like a batter standing at home plate—that can form the building block for good analysis. And the flow of the game is too anarchic, with constant change of possession, to be broken into a series of discrete moments, where actions can be judged to have clear cause and effect.

And, even when the game does yield data about a player, it's hard to invest much in it. More than most other sports, the performance of an individual player is highly dependent on the team around him—and on his coach. A great basketball star like LeBron James can flourish under the tutelage of a mediocre coach. But, in soccer, a poorly structured team can squelch even the greatest talent. This past season, when the Argentine Lionel Messi played with his club, Barcelona, he ran all over opponents. However, under his national team coach, Diego Maradona, he hardly ever scores. Maradona's formations simply can't construct room for Messi to run at opposing defenders, without him getting quickly blanketed—and they will likely account for yet another Argentinean disaster at the World Cup.

The data revolution in sports is, at its core, technocratic. Michael Lewis once wrote that its adherents view sports "not just as a game to be played but as a problem to be solved." Soccer, by contrast, is a world governed by ideology. The analytical vacuum left by the paucity of meaningful data has been filled by great debates about competing tactical systems. Soccer's history is a struggle among these systems, each claiming not just effectiveness but moral superiority. During the 1960s, the Italians adapted *catenaccio*, or the lockdown, a method for arraying players in a numbing defense—a tactic challenged by Dutch Total Football, a free-flowing system that grew out of Amsterdam's late-'60s liberalism. Over time, these debates replay themselves: How much beauty should be sacrificed for the sake of efficiency? Or, more granularly, how much freedom should defenders have to join the attack? Does the best attack feature one forward or two or three?

Billy Beane has become a fan of the beautiful game and even convinced the owners of the Oakland A's to purchase the soccer club in San Jose. Someday, he may help formulate the empirical answer to these primary questions. But, until he does, I will enjoy the fact that success in the game is a product not just of individual performances, but of theoretical opinions. Soccer hasn't been swallowed by social science, but remains essentially a branch of the humanities—a home to old-fashioned intellectualism. The game is not a problem to be solved. For now, at least, it is a blessedly endless argument.

Franklin Foer

Goal-Oriented

Fútbol: Better than basketball.

ETGAR KERET

My best friend, a notorious Americanophile, has been trying for years to get me to abandon the lush, green meadows of soccer for the thin, shiny parquet of the NBA. A dreary return match between Barcelona and Inter in the Champions League semifinals provided him with the perfect opportunity to try and convert me again. "How can you waste so many hours watching a game where the highlight is a close-up of a frustrated, unshaven Spanish player spitting on the ground?" he asked. "Even FIFA knows the game is mega boring. Why else would they try to jazz it up by changing the rules every year? Not that it helps. I mean, even if they make the goal three meters wider, throw out the offside rule, and have both goalkeepers play with one hand tied behind their backs, soccer will always be a slow, mind-numbing game. How can anyone with half a brain spend ninety minutes in front of the TV screen when he knows that, best-case scenario, he'll get to see one or two interesting plays and spend the rest of the time watching sweating, panting, hairy men argue with the referee and each other, or stage injuries to waste time?"

The answer—especially after a relatively disappointing Champions League series—is simple and sad. I love soccer because it is so painfully similar to life: slow, unjust, fairly random, usually boring, but always holding out the hope that, at some moment, however brief, everything will come together and take on meaning.

There's no getting away from it—life isn't about limber athletes sinking hoops from the three-point arc; life is an ongoing, uncoordinated, anguished effort to transcend our trivial existence, an effort that, if we're lucky, might lead to one brilliant move by Messi, Kaká, or some other dribbling magician. And then, for one split second, that whole damp 90-minute mishmash will turn into something coherent, beautiful, and worthwhile. And, when that moment and its endless playbacks fade, we will all return to our same drab reality of wasted time, pointless fouls, unreceived passes, and wild kicks that miss the goal by kilometers, only to wait with infinite patience and boundless hope for that next moment of grace.

Etgar Keret is a writer and filmmaker. His latest book is The Girl on the Fridge. Translated by Sondra Silverston.

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The Healer

Can Jonathan Jansen succeed where Mandela failed?

EVE FAIRBANKS

Bloemfontein, South Africa

It was as clear as the film's most famous scene: The work of reconciliation in South Africa is not done yet. In February 2008, a video appeared online showing four white students from South Africa's University of the Free State (UFS) hazing their black janitors as if they were new freshmen. There's a beer-drinking contest, a footrace to "Chariots of Fire." Near the end, the boys appear to pee into bowls of stew and urge the janitors to eat up. It was supposed to be an in-house joke, a protest against a plan to integrate their dorm, a student residence called Reitz. But one of the Reitz boys gave it to his girlfriend, then dumped her—that classic error of the Internet age—and she vengefully posted it on YouTube, where it drew one million viewers. For months, South Africa couldn't look away. It was the same urge we have to touch a bruise even though it hurts. The video seemed like a flare-up indicating a deeper national disease.

It may be hard to hear over the World Cup plastic trumpets, but there are whispers here that the aftermath of apartheid isn't working out as planned. Clint Eastwood's recent movie *Invictus* reintroduced Americans to the South Africa that was supposed to be: Mandela, played by Morgan Freeman, walks onto the field in front of a virtually all-white crowd at the 1995 Rugby World Cup in Johannesburg—a year after South Africa's first democratic election—wearing the green-and-gold jersey of the team that had long symbolized Afrikaner aggression and power, figuratively embracing his former jailers and establishing the template for national unity. But the reality looks a little different. The weekend *Invictus* opened on some 2,000 screens, the 29-year-old heir apparent to Mandela's African National Congress, Julius Malema, sent a text message to the country's foremost liberal white politician that read, "Wait until you see what is coming your direction."

It's strange, since they grew up without apartheid, but young South Africans seem to be growing more conscious of race as time goes on, not less. White kids are reclaiming "kaffir," a derogatory term for black people, and circulating the theory that, on the day Mandela dies, blacks will rise up and kill the whites in an auto-da-fé already named the "Night of the Long Knives." Meanwhile, Malema's taste for Moët-drenched parties and cryptic sayings—"Don't come here with that white tendency," "This is not America, it's Africa," "Go out, you bloody agent"—call to mind less Mandela and more Robert Mugabe.

Like the rest of the country, UFS was, for a few golden years after the fall of apartheid, an outward success story. The Free State, a province of huge Montana skies and dust and cattle, got its name from early Afrikaner settlers who left Cape Town to set up their independent nation, and the university, located in the regional capital of Bloemfontein, didn't enroll its first black undergraduate until 1988. But, by 1992, the number of black students had begun to double every year, and, soon, the school was winning a reputation for successfully navigating the post-apartheid world. "Everybody else was talking about us, that we were dealing with race so well," says Billyboy Ramahlele, a black liberation activist who joined the senior staff in 1994 and is now UFS's diversity director. Blacks began to move into the white dorms en masse, and Ramahlele designed a student parliament to give the students a chance to practice the techniques of multiracial cooperative self-governance. Mandela came to campus to declare UFS the very model of post-racial transformation.

But, behind the scenes, the students were finding it harder and harder to live together. In one dorm, residents hammered up plywood between black and white corridors and labeled it "emergency exit." By the turn of the millennium, the dorms had become completely segregated. Sometimes, administrators called them "cultural houses," but even they knew they were kidding themselves. The emergence of the Reitz video seemed to represent the culmination of a slow backward slide.

To reboot, the UFS council hired the first black person to lead the campus, a Cape Town–born academic named Jonathan Jansen. On a sunny Friday afternoon last October, Jansen was inaugurated in a ceremony full of cathartic symbolism. A dignitary swaddled him in the traditional cone-shaped hat and colorful woolen blanket of the local black Sotho tribe, and the university's black and white choirs were combined to perform a medley of Western and African songs. In his speech, Jansen vowed that every white student would learn to speak Sesotho, the Sotho language, and every black student would learn Afrikaans. The campus's incoming freshmen would be integrated 50-50. As for the four white boys who had filmed the video—they would be invited back to campus to finish their studies.

And so, Jansen began with a sweeping, *Invictus*-like gesture of forgiveness calculated to send a message not just to UFS but to the entire nation. The Cape Town papers covered his inauguration as if he'd been elected president, because he nearly had, in terms of his perceived importance to South Africa's future. The country was hungry for another Mandela, but who would it be? Malema is no candidate, and neither is President Jacob Zuma, who frittered away his first year in office doing damage control on the news that he fathered a secret baby with a buddy's daughter. Now, out of the dust of the Free State rose an ambitious figure preaching in the cadences of Mandela and Archbishop Desmond Tutu. Could he make his university a model for what post-apartheid South Africa might still become? I left Cape Town and moved to Bloemfontein to watch.

God rarely spared the Cape Flats, the dismal plain behind Cape Town's Table Mountain where Jansen was born in 1956, from its daily scouring by the sea wind just because it was a Sunday. So, on many Sunday mornings, all seven Jansens—four sons, a daughter, the mother, and the poor but proud patriarch—walked the whole three miles to church holding their hats onto their heads. You couldn't walk that part of the Flats on a Sunday without a hat, not then. The Jansens lived in a "colored" neighborhood, and the coloreds—a peculiarly South African term for a subset of black people with mixed ancestry—liked their religion formal. On that three-mile walk, the Jansens would pass countless other families dressed

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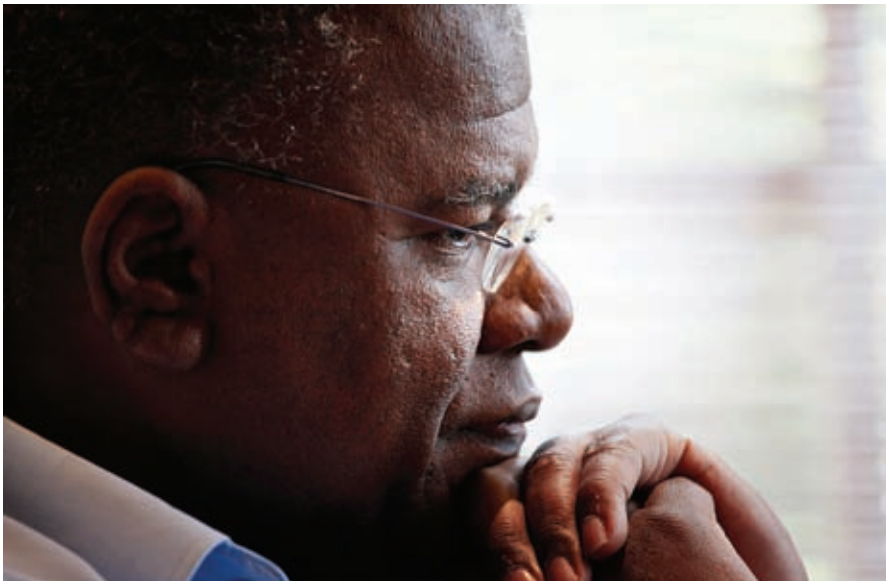
to the nines, wending their way to some outpost of the Methodists, the Anglicans, even the Dutch Reformed, the Afrikaners' strict Calvinist sect.

But the Steenberg Assembly, the church at which the Jansens' particular Sunday walk ended, was even more rigid than most. Old Mr. Henry would greet you at the door and hand you your hymnbook. Inside, benches would be set up in a circle according to the protocol of the Plymouth Brethren, the small Irish evangelical sect with which the Steenberg Assembly had its roots. Any Brethren member could sit in the circle and partake in communion. Anybody else had to sit at the back. The Brethren were serious about this insularity. If you were traveling and stopped in some Sunday to an unfamiliar Brethren church, you had to deliver a note from your pastor attesting that you were worthy to sit in the circle.



Jansen promised "a process that I think will transform this country enormously."

The sect insulated itself from politics, too. It is God's job, not man's, to fix bad laws, the Brethren would say. Render unto Caesar what is Caesar's. That didn't mean there was nothing a person could do. The core of the Brethren experience was "leading somebody to the Lord," in which a troubled person realizes his brokenness, is touched by the Holy Spirit, and undergoes an inner transformation. The Brethren would sometimes bring food along on the weekend evangelizing trips they took into South African wine country, but the black grape-pickers' material poverty wasn't their chief concern. "Our focus was souls," explains Peter Volmink, a childhood friend of Jansen.

Young Jonathan was devoted to the Brethren. He evangelized on trains and blanketed whole neighborhoods with tracts. He became a wildly popular youth preacher, renowned for trying to lead a particularly wide range of Flats characters to the Lord. Returning to evening Bible study from Lavender Hill, where gangsters puffed on dope and played dice on the sidewalks, he'd sometimes bring potential converts back with him. He befriended a taxi driver and a muscle-builder who performed handstands on Coke cans. When Jonathan brought his followers to church, says his sister, Naomi, you were basically "hoping that no one's going to pull out a knife and stab you during the service."

Eventually, though, politics started getting so hot that even a Brethren boy could ignore them no longer. Thousands of kids in black Soweto marched out of class in 1976; and, in 1977, two weeks before Jansen's twenty-first birthday, white policemen killed the black activist Steve Biko in custody. The Afrikaners had long endeavored to pacify the coloreds by stressing their mixed-race identity, but, by the time Jansen enrolled at the colored-only University of the Western Cape, "people would come into the library and say, 'You're black! We're black!'" remembers his best friend, Archie Dick. At a multiracial retreat, the peaceable Brethren inadvertently revealed to Jansen the heartbreakingly petty cruelties to which white people would stoop. During a break, the colored people were instructed to go drink tea in their cars. When Jansen peeked through a crack in a door, he saw the whites gorging off a table piled with cold cuts and frosted cakes.

People began to experience Jansen as angry. Naomi was afraid of him. But he never quite abandoned the wish to lead people toward the Lord. Only it had become white people now, and he didn't want to do it nicely. He wanted to rattle and torment them. A white church invited him to give a get-to-know-you talk at the end of one of its services, and Jansen preached a Jehovistic stem-winder on the Good Samaritan and "the sin of racism." The worshipers were horrified.

The Flats anger drove some of its sons into heavy protesting, even violence. But Jansen just took his anger along with him as he pursued a career in education. While South Africa burned in the 1980s, he took the anger to the countryside to teach high school, then to Stanford on scholarship. As Mandela brokered reconciliation in the '90s, Jansen took it to a university in black Zululand, where he rose up the management ranks. Finally, he took it to the white University of Pretoria, where he was appointed Dean of Education in 2000.

Pretoria was an Afrikaner stronghold. Jansen was in the belly of the beast now. He upended the curricula and instituted four hours a day of intellectual and moral boot camp for the mostly white, middle-aged Afrikaner ladies on staff, which he led himself, recounting awkward stories of his own persecution in barbershops for having kinky hair and mocking their old-fashioned churches and heteronormative marriages. He relished addressing a local Afrikaner boy scouts' meeting—an *Out of Africa*-meets-*The Skulls* affair in which white youngsters marched with torches and colonial flags—and informing university alumni that their old home was Jonathan Jansen's campus now.

But he was also noticing that these Pretoria Afrikaners were affecting *him*. He couldn't get over how sad and fearful and emasculated they seemed, underneath that typical white cockiness and aggression. It was weirdly touching. They had been defeated, broken, paraded before the world as evildoers, and who would comfort them? He was starting to feel troubled. He wandered through Johannesburg's Apartheid Museum trying to look at the exhibits through white eyes and stumbled out shaken, because everything they did made sense to him.

During this tumultuous time in Pretoria, Jansen accepted an invitation to speak at a summer camp for white girls outside the city. He had given up disseminating tracts long before, but he decided he would speak on the Good Samaritan, like he'd done in the white church years ago. In

AP PHOTO/JEROME DELAY

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the middle of the talk, one of the girls put up her hand. Intellectually, she said, she understood why racism was bad, but how could she trust black people when some had tried to kill her in a carjacking?

Something in Jansen crested, then broke. He told the girls a story he'd never told anyone, of a violent encounter with a white policeman as a boy, and how he'd come to hate and fear white people. "All my life I have been struggling to cross this bridge toward people who look like you," he confessed. "All I can ask of you is that you too try to cross the same bridge, from the other side, and maybe, just maybe, we will meet each other somewhere in the middle." He wept. The girls, too. He'd never felt more relieved in his life. These white people had led him to grace, and they were his children, he decided. He would not only meet them in the middle, he would go further. He would, he later wrote in a memoir of his time in Pretoria, "spend all my energy to help them make the transition across this difficult bridge."

I met Jansen late one afternoon in his UFS office to talk about his transformation. The publicity photos I'd seen of him often seemed to have been taken slightly from below, giving him a bit of the look of a Disney Hercules, all thighs and hips and folded arms astride the battlements, but, in person, he looks smaller, with wire glasses that make him appear almost shy. He led me to a couch by a window and settled in to relive the experience of putting it all to paper. He was back at Stanford on a Fulbright, living alone in a bare apartment with nothing but his laptop and the tormenting visions of all the chances he'd lost to love whites thanks to his pointless bitterness. "So many nights, I thought, 'Oh my God, I was such a terrible person,'" he said.

Soon after he got back from Palo Alto, the Reitz video hit the Internet, revealing a campus that seemed to be hurting in some of the ways Jansen had hurt until his epiphany. After he was appointed UFS's rector, he began to sound a little religious about the deliverance that could happen there. "You will see a process that I think will transform this country enormously," he told journalists. For his student dean, he hired an Afrikaner former preacher who says he perceives a *versugting* for healing on campus, an Afrikaans word that translates somewhere between "longing" and "prayer." In his inaugural speech, Jansen quoted from the Book of Esther: "Is it possible you have come into the kingdom for a time such as this?"

He announced a raft of rejuvenation plans—new lecturers from all over Africa, a laptop for every freshman—but the essence was to foster black-white empathy by refashioning the university's culture into a bridge: the one on which whites and blacks meet perfectly in the middle. As a black man, he'd set the example of outreach from the top. Many had written off the boys who made the video as hopeless racists, he told the audience at his inauguration, but he couldn't "deny" them any more than he could deny "my own children." It was radical to forgive, but it was also crafty. Jansen believed he was socking away goodwill for later. "I cannot tell you what an incredibly powerful message it sends to all South Africans," he told the South African magazine *Leadership*, "but especially white South Africans."

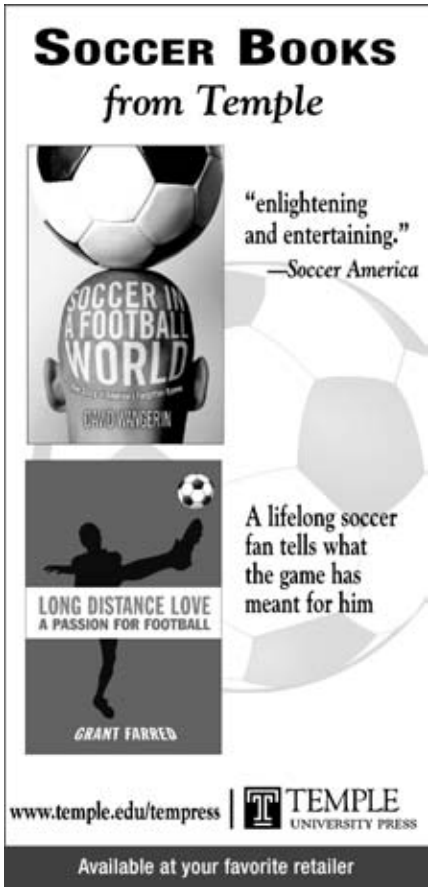
Six months later, Jansen says he sees the evidence of reconciliation on campus nearly every day. The morning I met him, he'd been up at 5 a.m. writing a recommendation letter for a boy active in the Freedom Front Plus, South Africa's right-wing Afrikaner political party. "We have an emotional bond I'm really proud of," he told me. Recently, an Afrikaner girl hugged him on the quad and said it was a message of love from her sick grandmother. "Can you believe this is the campus on which Reitz happened?" he marvels. "Me as the black guy, and she starts to tear up."

But how deep are the feelings that give rise to tears? And how long do they last? In April, a week after I spoke with Jansen—and three months after he declared in a speech that UFS's main campus was now the most integrated in South Africa—I sat in on the student parliament that Billyboy Ramahlele set up in the 1990s to give black and white students a chance to engage. It looked like the perfect tableau of the community Jansen wants to build. Young black and white student leaders marched in together, projecting a fastidious aura of professionalism and mutual respect. It was flip-flop weather, but the representatives were in fine business dress, the boys in vests, the girls in heels and elegant drop earrings underneath their sprayed coiffures. In honor of a black student leader who had recently died, the white kids wore black, and, in honor of the white kids' desire to speak Afrikaans like in the old days—even though their English is passable—high-tech translation headsets were laid out on the desks.

But soon the tableau dissolved. Once inside, the students sat apart, the blacks on the right and the whites on the left. The meeting commenced with the singing of three "black" songs, and the white students sat in stony silence, chewing gum. A white boy began to speak in Afrikaans, and the leader of the black bloc interrupted, saying he shouldn't speak Afrikaans if the blacks couldn't speak Sesotho. The leader of the white bloc declared this a trick to get the whites' goat by invoking some tendentious principle of equity when everybody knew Sesotho translators were not available. "Bloody agent," snickered a black boy, and titters rippled through the room.

The arguments grew more and more outrageous. The blacks suggested the whites had stolen communal money. The whites suggested the blacks had snuck in more than their allotted number of bodies, thereby stacking the votes. Both suggested the other race violated rules of order. "Let's go to the Bible," quipped the black chair, thumbing through the student parliament's constitution. A white boy leapt to his feet. "You offended my religion, and I would like you to apologize," he said.

The titters became shouts. The beleaguered chair doled out reprimands—to a white boy named Abrie Marais for talking, to a black boy named Thabiso Letsoara for "howling" at Marais—but no matter. People were jumping from their seats. Marais leaned over a chair and



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conducted Letsoara feverishly with his pointer fingers: Sing, parrot! Letsoara exaggeratedly bowed back at Marais: Yes, master! White students steadily streamed from the room. A fight erupted over the word "we": Is Moses Masitha, UFS's black student body president, justified in using that word, when he also talks about the "masses," which obviously means the blacks? Has there ever been any "we" in this country, anyway? "I would please ask the honorable member to apologize," pleaded a white student. But Masitha was gone.

A slender, reflective philosophy major who is, like Jansen, the first black person to occupy his post, Masitha is as natural an ally for Jansen as anybody in UFS's black community. He told me over coffee he'd been excited for Jansen's arrival—although before he met him, and after reading a few of his columns in the newspaper, he assumed he would be white.

But Jansen's inaugural speech forgiving the Reitz boys—the one he said sent "an incredibly powerful message … to all South Africans"—came as a shock to Masitha. (He wasn't the only one. After the speech, black students marched on the new rector's office.) The janitors had never said they wanted to forgive. Who was Jansen to do it for them? And it was bitter to think that this is what reconciliation would mean, at the end of the day: turning the other cheek to even the most unrepentant whites. "The picture being painted is whites are the victim," Masitha says. In reality, "the blacks are still treated as guests at this university. Not even guests. Immigrants."

All semester, the white students had been lodging complaints about the student parliament, alleging it was a circus that pointlessly inflamed tempers and made campus unity impossible. Not long after I attended the April meeting, Jansen suspended it. Thabiso Letsoara, the representative reprimanded for "howling" at a white boy, was furious. He acknowledged some "funny actions," but said that, if Jansen couldn't see how important it was for black students to call attention to the power imbalance between Afrikaans and Sesotho on campus, he was hardly black at all. Letsoara charged Jansen with preferring the Freedom Front Plus. While he couldn't support what had become of his student parliament, Billyboy Ramahlele did muse that these are strange days indeed. UFS finally has a black rector, yet it can feel as though "the black voice" on campus is "silent."

In our interview, Jansen dismissed these criticisms. Some people say he's too white, he said, but others say he's too black, and this probably means he's doing something right. It seemed pretty brazen to me that whites would complain about Jansen, after the bone he threw them with his inaugural speech, but they do. The Afrikaans newspapers are filled with letters to the editor demanding that Jansen apologize for some perceived insult—to the farmers of the Free State, to the historically white university in nearby Potchefstroom. "It's just not possible," one white journalist concluded, that Jansen can be on both sides at once.

Jan van Niekerk, the Freedom Front Plus's Free State youth leader, boasted to me that he saw through Jansen "from the very beginning." What about the goodwill Jansen built with his inaugural speech? Oh yes, that sounded nice, but look at his actions. Jansen revealed himself, said van Niekerk, with his obviously preferential treatment of a group of black students who oversaw a rowdy freshman initiation. Van Niekerk claimed Jansen expelled some whites guilty of the same sin. "If he says this white student is wrong, he also needs to say this black student is wrong," he said. "So, thank you for what? Thank you for nothing."

A few weeks after I got to Bloemfontein, South Africa celebrated the twentieth anniversary of Nelson Mandela's release from jail. But it hardly felt like a party. Winnie Madikizela-Mandela, Mandela's ex-wife, channeled the mood when she told a reporter for a British paper—V.S. Naipaul's wife, as it happened—that South African blacks were starting to feel like they should not be celebrating Mandela at all. "He agreed to a bad deal for the blacks," she said. "Economically, we are still on the outside." She excoriated him for trooping onto the Nobel podium with his "jailer," F.W. de Klerk, and called the Mandela name "an albatross around the necks of my family."

Madikizela-Mandela ultimately denied having given the interview at all, but it was too late. "There are countless lips in Soweto and around the world who have breathed a sigh of relief that, at long last, someone had the courage to utter the words that have always been in some hearts," Sandile Memela, a black commentator, wrote on his blog.

If Mandela had worked a miracle, the feeling goes, then where is the evidence of that miracle now in people's lives? Sixteen years after apartheid ended, South Africa is still characterized by unbelievable inequality. Comfort and poverty still wear their familiar old colors. The average black South African earns one-eighth of what his white counterpart does. In the city, whites with similar training are more likely to become managers than blacks, according to a recent government study. In the country, whites own more than 85 percent of commercial farmland. Mandela had stressed emotional reconciliation—think the Truth and Reconciliation Commission—over structural transformation, and this was the result.

I was speaking to black students and staff at UFS while black writers were deconstructing Mandela in the papers, and they seemed to echo each other. The UFS black community was a little skeptical of Jansen's interest in emotions. "The psyche is something, but it is not everything," said Masitha. "I don't think he's gone to the root of the problem." The root of the problem, as black students and staff described it, is infrastructure. When I paid visits to the three black boys' dorms on campus, I perceived a *versugting* in those places—for better stuff. It was the state of their kitchens they complained about. Two-plate stoves that had not been upgraded to four-plate. The laptops for the freshmen, which had not yet appeared. "Jansen is like Obama to me," one third-year said. Lots of talk, he meant, and not enough action.

Tswelopele, a dorm whose name is Sesotho for "progress," is particularly plain. Practically its only adornment is the hand-painted coat of arms that hangs over a busted pink couch on the porch. At first I thought it showed a black hand and a white hand clasping, but then I realized each hand was half and half. The white hand turns black at the fingertips, and the black hand turns white. The ideal of racial union existed long before Jansen dreamed of the bridge at the girls' summer camp. In fact, Tswelopele was once its prototype. Around the same time as the Reitz video came out, a group of about 20 white boys had voluntarily moved in, defying their community's elders. But Tefo Mofokeng, Tswelopele's student president, told me that all but four are gone now. He said there are actually fewer white people living in Tswelopele than before Jansen showed up.

"It's just not possible," one white journalist concluded, that Jansen can be on both sides at once.

Meanwhile, many of the white freshmen put in the historically black dorms in January have also left. Theories abound as to why they moved out, but a preva-

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lent one is simple. The historically white dorms next door, I was told, have wealthier alumni and more cash for goodies like plasma televisions. The black students felt their dorms looked like crap.

It didn't seem so promising to employ Mandela-ism on the UFS campus, at least not from the black perspective. There have always been two visions here of what post-apartheid South Africa should be. One calls for a society that bettered the living conditions of its formerly oppressed majority. The other calls for South Africans to become better on the inside, to focus on overcoming the ancient instinct for revenge and banishing race hate—like Jansen did—from their hearts. Jansen and Mandela had chosen to emphasize the latter. They had, in a way, approached their wounded institutions—the university after the Reitz video, South Africa after apartheid—like the Brethren had approached the poor grape-pickers in the wine country, worried more about the state of souls than about people's external circumstances.

"Holdup in Hillbrow," Johannesburg, November 1963

From an exhibition of photos of South Africa by David Goldblatt, which will run through September 19 at the Jewish Museum in New York. Photo courtesy of David Goldblatt and the Goodman Gallery, Johannesburg.

I have heard whites speak more often of the inner-transformation vision of post-apartheid justice, for an obvious reason: It's the scenario that allows them to hold on to what they have. But, if Jansen subscribes to the vision favored by whites, then why doesn't Jan van Niekerk trust him? If Mandela chose moral rebirth over structural transformation after 1994, why were white journalists this spring lashing into F.W. de Klerk for having negotiated them a bad deal? It's because everybody knows structural transformation has to come, sooner or later. Whites may own more than 85 percent of commercial farmland now, but the government has vowed that at least 30 percent of it must be transferred to black people, someday. Jansen told me a great leader knows how to "communicate emotionally to people that it's OK." But, for those who are truly afraid, such reassurances must be as comfortless as the ministrations of the hospice nurse sent to midwife you into oblivion.

This month, while both whites and blacks in Bloemfontein groused—and the four Reitz boys, who didn't get Jansen's type of mercy from the state, prepared for their July trial on the uniquely South African charge of *crimen injuria*, or "impairing the dignity of another"—Jansen flew from Johannesburg to Cape Town to spread the good news of the miracle at UFS, and, finally, over the Atlantic to accept an honorary doctorate from Cleveland State. There, he told the graduates that bold leadership means "to do what is unexpected," using Mandela's forgiveness of his white jailers as his example. But perhaps a man's own journey of transformation just cannot model a state's, or a university's—especially if he's frequently away from campus. Did everything go the way Jesus wanted after he left to do his victory laps heaven-side?

That's not to say that individual transformations won't make a difference. This year—the same year he became disillusioned with Jansen's notion of reconciliation—Moses Masitha fell in love with a white girl, the praise singer at his church. Twenty-five years ago, their relationship would have been against the law. He took me to church with him one Sunday evening. The pastor preached on Isaiah 66:8: *Can a land be born in one day? Can a nation be brought forth in one moment?* After the service, he and his girlfriend took each other's hands and walked brashly out of church together.

Eve Fairbanks is living in South Africa as a fellow at the Institute of Current World Affairs.

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Stanley Kauffmann on Films

RECOGNITIONS

Some situations in film stories are so common that, when a film character enters one of those situations, he must be reminded of a similar moment in a picture he himself has seen. For prime instance, an extramarital affair. When such an affair looms in *Mademoiselle Chambon*, the viewer can't help feeling that the two people sense they are beginning to repeat a film. How could any two intelligent people fail to remember films with similar stories, fail to feel that their film experience is in some degree blended with their beings? If that is true, whatever the subject, for many of us viewers, why wouldn't it be equally true for people who are actually the characters in a film? And when the film is as well done as this one is, the blending enriches.

Mademoiselle Chambon is set in a French town, unnamed. Jean, fortyish, strong, affectionate, is a construction worker in his own firm. His wife, Anne-Marie, works in a print shop. They have a young son, Jérémy, and nearby is Jean's elderly father, whom they all care for. (Regularly Jean washes his father's feet for him.) Our first minutes with all of them are the first of the film's victories. A happy family is established without glop, with no mechanical strain of a norm being set up in order to be altered. The director Stéphane Brizé, who wrote the screenplay with Florence Vignon (adapted from an Eric Holder novel), is so intent on the daily mosaic of his people's lives that we hardly notice they are all happy.

Because Anne-Marie is ill one day, Jean has to pick up Jérémy at school and thus meets the boy's teacher, Véronique Chambon, blonde, friendly-and-reserved. The moment they meet we know what the film is going to be about, although there is not the slightest hint from either of them. Yet it is hard to avoid thinking that Jean and Véronique must be reminded of films with similar beginnings. When they next meet, Véronique mentions that a window in her house needs repair, and when Jean agrees to do it, we know that the die is cast. But all the movement toward the affair is slow, graceful. It takes some time before they even kiss. They both know two things: how they feel and what they are risking. They cannot help proceeding. (Just as in those films they have seen, which are never mentioned.)

MADEMOISELLE CHAMBON
Lorber Films

THE FATHER OF MY CHILDREN
IFC Films

Véronique plays the violin, was almost a professional, and, at Jean's request, plays for him one day. He, without being suddenly transformed into an aesthete, is much moved. So are we, because we see how he and she are trying to envision the future. He invites her to play at his father's birthday party. She agrees, and when she plays Anne-Marie notices the way that Jean is listening and suspects why he has seemed so preoccupied lately.

Véronique has not had a permanent teaching job—she fills in at different schools when there is a temporary vacancy—but now she is offered a permanent post in this school. Understandably, she decides to move on to a post elsewhere. When Jean hears this, he wants to go with her. She tells him that she is leaving the next day on a train at ten. It is up to him to come along or not.

Next morning she is on the train platform, not actually expecting him but constantly looking for him. He, as the skillful editing discloses, is (possibly) hurrying to get there, packed bag and all. The sequence is something like a moment in that insufficiently appreciated gem *The Bridges of Madison County*. (One of the best examples of good art made from poor art.) Meryl Streep, a farmer's wife who has had an affair with a visiting stranger, is riding down the street with her husband when she sees the stranger's car as he makes his way ahead—forever. It is her last chance to go with him. Streep, like Jean in this film, has a moment in which to weigh the present against the future—and the past. I wondered if Jean had seen Streep's scene.

Much of the verity of *Mademoiselle Chambon* comes from the two main performances. Vincent Lindon gives Jean, from his very first pneumatic-drill moments, an aura of power, and he soon adds maturity, affection, humor. Sandrine Kiberlain, in the title role, is one of those women who, without startling beauty, are beautiful. And she is able to suggest that she is withdrawn, peeking through curtains, even when she is in a room facing someone.

Brizé directs with a sense of texture—he knows the world that each of his people contains, and he tempers the film accordingly. Presumptuously perhaps, still reasonably, we can assume that his two lovers feel they were entering the shape of some films they had seen and wanted somehow to be wiser for it. Film has by now created its own sort of collective unconscious.

Another French film is a bit of a puzzler for a while. It is consistently good, or else it wouldn't puzzle; still, discussing it is a challenge.

ANTHONY RUSSO

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The Father of My Children is in two parts. The first part is especially welcome: it deals with a Paris film production chief—thus a man who helps to make the dream ambience of the people in *Mademoiselle Chambon*—and it deals with him in a manner that shows the grit under the dream. Then quite suddenly it alters into a different film, fulfilling the title but a drastic change. What is really sticky: the event that ends Part One and starts Part Two is what we might normally consider the end of the picture, not to be revealed in a review. But the film-makers have put it smack in the middle and therefore made it impossible to elide.

Grégoire Canvel is a production chief, about fifty, lean, quick, rationally emotional—he responds quickly to provocations but is always in control. He is married to Sylvia and has three daughters, the oldest an early teenager. He has troubles. In the first few minutes he is constantly in motion in the busy Paris streets, walking, driving, always talking on a cell phone. His company, Moon Films, which has a picture in production now in Sweden, is in a money jam, and Grégoire is much like Douglas Fairbanks in *The Three Musketeers*, except instead of fighting off numerous swordsmen on a staircase, he is fending off numerous creditors. An immediately taking quality in him is that when he meets his family, in town or at their country house, he at once ceases to be a fraught boss and becomes a loving father—tumbling, teasing, et cetera. He is able to be completely in any moment, whatever the moment is.

Moon Films is not big, but it has had a generally successful record up to now. The offices are far from grand, and they are staffed with people who care about the films, about Grégoire. The office traffic is a smaller version of the busy streets through which we first saw him bustling. All of the staff support Grégoire in his struggle to preserve Moon's catalogue—that is, to keep from selling off their past films to an unknown buyer in order to save the company.

In the midst of this bother Grégoire manages to visit his people in Sweden to lubricate production hassles if he can. Besides the money storms, there are blips with the genius Swedish director. Grégoire manages at least to leave them all more adjusted to their problems. Back in Paris, still moving swiftly, he continues to fence with creditors. Though he doesn't himself seem to worsen, conditions clearly do.

Then, as if in some sudden recognition of the facts, we see him withdraw some papers and a pistol from what is apparently a safe-deposit box. Without fuss or drama, he sits down on a curb in the street and burns the papers, slipping the ashes through a grate. Then he stands up and shoots himself. There in the street.

Besides the emotional shock—our response within the film itself—we feel a formal shock. Should this shooting have come so soon in the film? Isn't this the finish, not an event along the way? The world has long noted that much of the effect of Janet Leigh's murder in *Psycho* is that a star isn't usually killed off so soon. Thus Grégoire's death seems out of place.

But not for long. What follows is the real point of the picture. The pace of the film does not change. Grégoire's family, grieved deeply, nonetheless manages to move on. The writer-director, Mia Hansen-Løve, conveys through the unchanged tempo that Grégoire is still the head of this household. Sylvia, with the aid of his brother and lawyers, tries to save Moon Films. Clémence, the oldest daughter, continues to extend her acquaintance with the ups and downs of maturing. The two younger girls have steps and dodges and problems to keep them moving forward. Overall it is extraordinary that a finished character should be kept present in a film by the way that the film is edited and shot. In fact, at the end, when the family moves from Paris, the closing shots are like an encore of the opening ones—moving swiftly through the teeming streets. Grégoire continues to be the father of his children.

Louis-Do de Lencquesaing, who has worked with Chabrol and Godard and Handke and Haneke, gives Grégoire the perfect paradoxical state—complete control when he is harried. Grégoire seems so intently focused on his goals that he is unshaken by obstacles, yet within the armor of intent, he is vulnerable. De Lencquesaing's actual daughter Alice plays Grégoire's teenage daughter and evokes in us exactly the right parental feelings. Chiara Caselli is movingly afraid and firm as her Italian mother.

Hansen-Løve began her career as an actress, then, after a period as a critic, became a director. She made some shorts, then a first feature. *The Father of My Children*, her second, shows such clarity of purpose, such dexterity of style, such concord with actors, that she whets our appetite. ◆

Jack Goldsmith
THE NEW VULNERABILITY

CYBER WAR: THE NEXT THREAT TO NATIONAL SECURITY AND WHAT TO DO ABOUT IT
By Richard A. Clarke and Robert K. Knake
(Ecco Press, 290 pp., $25.99)

I.

For several months in late 2009, computer operators in China scoured Google Web pages and networking sites such as Facebook and LinkedIn to gather personal information on high-level Google employees working in China. They used this information to create and send a Google employee (probably a network administrator) an instant message that convincingly appeared to be written by a friend or coworker. The message contained a link to a computer in Taiwan that the Chinese operators had taken over and loaded with a software "payload" designed to exploit a previously unknown vulnerability in Microsoft's Internet Explorer.

When the Google employee clicked on the link, through her Explorer browser, to a fake but credible website on the Taiwan computer, the payload was secretly delivered to and installed on her computer, creating a virtual "trapdoor." The Chinese operators marched through this trapdoor. They surreptitiously took over the Google employee's machine. Acting from computers in China but appearing to be a trusted user inside Google's computer network in Mountain View, California, they gained access to information about the accounts of democratic dissidents in China as well as some of Google's crown jewels, including its intellectual property, its development plans, and its password system. The same operation that hacked into Google also infiltrated scores of other prominent American information technology and defense firms.

For the past few decades, and with increasing frequency, many thousands

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of foreign agents like the Google hackers, sitting before computer monitors abroad, have "entered" the United States to steal or to destroy valuable digital assets. They have raided the Pentagon and other government agencies to disrupt their communications and to lift sensitive or classified information. They have attacked American corporations and taken or destroyed untold millions of dollars worth of data or intellectual property. They have contacted CEOs and credibly threatened to destroy their businesses unless the CEOs met the extortionists' demands. And they have planted malicious software—known ominously as malware—inside government and corporate headquarters, and in critical infrastructure systems such as electrical grids and power plants. Some of this malware allows them to monitor activities in these places; other malware, called "logic bombs," enables them to trigger a destructive attack years later, if doing so would be useful.

If this were happening before our eyes—if thousands of foreign agents were physically entering our borders, breaking into brick-and-mortar buildings, and removing or destroying billions of dollars of proprietary information and monetary assets—the government would declare a national emergency. But it is happening largely out of public sight, on computers and computer networks, and so most people are not worried. The press is increasingly filled with scary stories about cyber thefts, cyber attacks, and even cyber war, and Google's public confrontation with the Chinese raised awareness of the problem. But the cyber menace is still largely invisible to the public, which naturally discounts threats it cannot see, no matter how alarming the headlines.

Yet the threat is not invisible to the government. And the government is alarmed. "This cyber threat is one of the most serious economic and national security challenges we face as a nation," President Obama declared in May 2009, before pledging that the protection of "our digital infrastructure" was a national security "priority." In February, Director of National Intelligence Dennis Blair warned that "malicious cyber activity is occurring on an unprecedented scale with extraordinary sophistication," and concluded that America's digital infrastructure was "severely threatened." Blair's predecessor, Michael McConnell, said last year that "a coordinated attack from a remote location by a small group on our electric grid, transportation network, and banking system could create damage as potentially great as a nuclear weapon over time."

Richard Clarke agrees with these assessments of the cyber threat. He worries in particular that it could lead to a "full-scale cyber war" with the "potential to change the world military balance and thereby fundamentally alter political and economic relations." Clarke was George W. Bush's adviser on cyber security and cyber terrorism for two years after a long career as a senior counterterrorism official during many administrations. His book focuses too much on a single aspect of the cyber problem, and sometimes it fails to carry its analysis to its proper conclusion; but it is nonetheless a good introduction to this esoteric but very serious national security problem, and citizens should read it.

Many factors make computer systems vulnerable, but the most fundamental factor is their extraordinary complexity. Most computers connected to the Internet are general-purpose machines designed to perform multiple tasks. The operating-system software that manages these tasks—as well as the computer's relationship to the user—typically has tens of millions, and sometimes more than one hundred million, lines of operating instructions, or code. It is practically impossible to identify and to analyze all the different ways these lines of code can interact or might fail to operate as expected. And when the operating-system software interfaces with computer processors, various software applications, Web browsers, and the endless and endlessly complex pieces of hardware and software that constitute the computer and telecommunications networks that make up the Internet, the potential for unforeseen mistakes or failures becomes unfathomably large.

The complexity of computer systems often leads to accidental mistakes or failures. We have all suffered computer crashes, and sometimes these crashes cause serious problems. Last year the Internet in Germany and Sweden went down for several hours due to errors in the domain name system that identifies computers on the Internet. In January of this year, a software problem in the Pentagon's global positioning system network prevented the Air Force from locking onto satellite signals on which they depend for many tasks. The accident on the Washington Metro last summer, which killed nine people and injured dozens, was probably caused by a malfunction in the computer system that controls train movements. Three years ago, six stealth F-22 Raptor jets on their maiden flights were barely able to return to base when their onboard computers crashed.

The same complexity that leads to such malfunctions also creates vulnerabilities that human agents can use to make computer systems operate in unintended ways. Such cyber threats come in two forms. A cyber attack is an act that alters, degrades, or destroys adversary computer systems or the information in or transiting through those systems. Cyber attacks are disruptive activities. Examples include the manipulation of a computer system to take over an electricity grid, or to block military communications, or to scramble or erase banking data. Cyber exploitations, by contrast, involve no disruption, but merely monitoring and related espionage on computer systems, as well as the copying of data that is on those systems. Examples include the theft of credit card information, trade secrets, health records, or weapons software, and the interception of vital business, military, and intelligence communications.

Both cyber attacks and cyber exploitations are very hard to defend against. "The aggressor has to find only one crucial weakness; the defender has to find all of them, and in advance," wrote Herman Kahn in 1960 in his famous book *On Thermonuclear War*. This generally true proposition about defense systems has special salience for computer networks. Even if (as is often not the case) those trying to find and patch computer vulnerabilities outnumber those trying to find and exploit the vulnerabilities, the attacker often still has an advantage. Under the Kahn principle, some fraction of the time the attacker will discover a vulnerability that the defender missed. And she need only find one, or a few, vulnerabilities to get in the system and cause trouble.

Once a vulnerability is identified, an attack or exploitation is relatively easy to disguise, because the operation of a computer is almost entirely hidden from the user. Malware can be embedded in a computer system without the user's knowledge, either remotely (when the user downloads an infected program or when she visits an infected website) or at any point in the multi-country global supply chain that develops and produces most commercial software. And once it is embedded, malware can be used for any number of tasks, including data destruction, theft, taking over the computer for various purposes, recording keystrokes to discover passwords, and much more. Many forms of malware are hard for engineers to find through diagnostic testing and are missed by anti-virus software.

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Computer users often do not discover malware before an attack makes clear that something has gone wrong. They often never discover malware that facilitates computer exploitations or, as in the Google case, they discover it too late.

The inherent insecurity of computer systems is exacerbated by the number and incentives of actors around the globe who are empowered to take advantage of computer vulnerabilities. In real space, geography serves as a natural barrier to attack, theft, and espionage: only if you get near the Pentagon can you attack it; only if you get near the Citibank branch in New York can you rob it. And if you are near these places in real space, American law enforcement and military authorities can exercise their full powers, within U.S. sovereignty, to check or deter the attack. In cyberspace, geography matters much less because the Internet links computers globally with speed-of-light communication. As the Google case shows, someone sitting at a terminal in China can cause significant harm in the United States. And of course there are countless people around the globe with access to a computer who would like to do bad things inside the United States. To the extent that they are located outside the United States, American law enforcement authorities have much less effective power to stop or to deter them. The FBI must rely on law enforcement authorities in foreign countries who are often slow and uncooperative, giving bad cyber actors time to cover their tracks. And the American military cannot enter a foreign country unless the threat or attack rises to the level of war.

Law enforcement and military authorities seeking to check malicious cyber activity face another fundamental challenge: the "attribution problem" of identifying the author of a cyber attack or cyber exploitation. It is very difficult, and very resource-intensive, and sometimes impossible, to trace with much certainty the computer origin of a professional cyber attack or cyber exploitation; it is even harder to do so in real time or even in the short-term. A thoughtful adversary can hide its tracks by routing attacks or exploitations through anonymizing computers around the globe. Last summer, a denial-of-service attack—a massive spam-like attack that clogs channels of communication—brought down some American and South Korean websites. Early reports said that the attack came from North Korea, but a few weeks later it was learned that the attack originated in Miami (and possibly, before Miami, elsewhere) and was routed through North Korea. We still do not know for sure who launched the attack, or from where.

Even if we can determine with some certainty which computer in the world is behind an attack or exploitation, that fact alone does not indicate who, or even which country, is responsible for the aggression. In 2009, a detailed study by the Information Warfare Monitor uncovered an extensive plot known as "Ghostnet," which emanated from computers in China and infiltrated more than one thousand sensitive government and commercial computer systems from over one hundred countries. But the report could not determine whether the plot was controlled by the Chinese government, or by private "patriotic hackers" acting in the Chinese interest but without government involvement, or by a criminal network in China. Nor could it rule out the possibility that "a state other than China" was behind the plot, using agents to launch the operation from China in an attempt to "deliberately mislead observers as to the true operator(s) and purpose of the *GhostNet* system." Law enforcement and military officials are hobbled not only by geography, then, but also by their inability to know for sure where and by whom a cyber attack or exploitation originated.

Taken together, these factors—our intimate and growing reliance on computer systems, the inherent vulnerability of these systems, the network's global nature and capacity for near-instant communication (and thus attack), the territorial limits on police power, the very high threshold for military action abroad, the anonymity that the Internet confers on bad actors, and the difficulty anonymity poses for any response to a cyber attack or cyber exploitation—make it much easier than ever for people outside one country to commit very bad acts against computer systems and all that they support inside another country. On the Internet, states and their agents, criminals and criminal organizations, hackers and terrorists are empowered to impose significant harm on computers anywhere in the world with a very low probability of detection.

II.

Most damaging cyber acts are the equivalent of real-space crimes committed by private actors: identity and data theft, extortion, destruction of property, illegal copying and other intellectual-property crimes, and the like. Computers and computer networks have been employed to facilitate crime since the dawn of the Inter-

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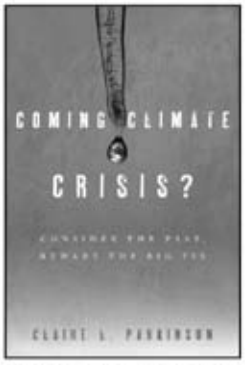

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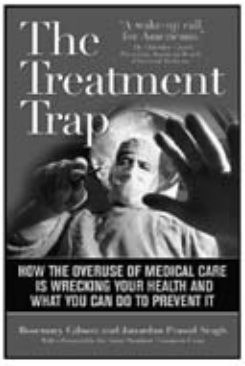

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net, but for most of this time criminal efforts were ad hoc and disorganized. In the last six or seven years, however, we have witnessed what Tyler Moore, Richard Clayton, and Ross Anderson describe in a recent essay for the *Journal of Economic Perspectives* as "the rapid growth and industrialization" of online crime.

Today powerful criminal organizations operate in flourishing online black markets to buy and sell information about software vulnerabilities and an endless variety of sophisticated malware weapons that can be used to exploit these vulnerabilities. They infect, gather, and rent huge clusters of compromised zombie computers known as "botnets" that can be used for denial-of-service attacks or "phishing" expeditions (feigned trustworthy messages of the general sort that tricked the Google administrators). They buy and sell criminal services ranging from phishing-for-hire to money laundering. And they trade in stolen goods such as credit card and Social Security numbers and identification and login credentials. According to the computer security firm Symantec, a stolen credit card number fetches between eighty-five cents and thirty dollars on the black market. For twenty bucks you can buy someone's essential identity information: name, address, birth date, and Social Security number.

President Obama noted last year that cyber criminals stole an estimated $1 trillion in intellectual property from businesses worldwide in 2008. In truth, we lack both the reliable data and the metrics needed to know for certain the amount of losses from online criminal activities. Most security experts believe that the already massive online criminal industry is growing in size, sophistication, and success at a faster rate than companies, individuals, and law enforcement authorities are improving computer defenses. And the losses are surely much greater than have been made public, for most companies that are targets of cyber attacks and cyber exploitations have a powerful incentive not to report their losses, which might lead to stock-price drops, lawsuits, and consumer anger.

Clarke is aware of the scope of cyber crime by individuals and private organizations, but he believes that the most serious cyber threat to the United States lies with states that have cyber weapons far superior to anything possessed by individuals or organizations. Some of those weapons were employed in Russia's shutdown of Georgian governmental websites during the South Ossetia conflict in 2008; and in Israel's takedown of Syrian air defenses as a prelude to its military strike on a nuclear facility in the Deir ez-Zor region in 2007; and in the Bush administration's cyber attacks on cell phones and computers used by insurgents in Iraq.

Clarke says that those skirmishes are "far from indicative of what can be done." States have "more sophisticated capabilities" that could "devastate a modern nation" by destroying its military and civilian infrastructure, either as part and parcel of a traditional war, or as a prelude to it, or as a substitute for it. Indeed, Clarke declares that in fact cyber war has already begun. "In anticipation of hostilities, nations are already 'preparing the battlefield' " by "hacking into each other's networks and infrastructures, laying in trapdoors and logic bombs—now, in peacetime."

The nation that most worries Clarke is China. He says, basing his judgment on public sources, that the Chinese military is committed to using cyber tools to make up for its military deficiencies against the United States. Its twin strategy is to steal America's military-technological know-how and, in the event of a military confrontation, to damage the American home front "asymmetrically, through a cyber attack." Clarke details the many ways that China has, since the 1990s, "systematically done all the things a nation would do if it contemplated having an offensive war capability." It has stolen many American military and technological secrets, created citizen hacker groups, established cyber-war military units, prepared elaborate cyber defenses, and laced American infrastructure (especially our electrical grids) with logic bombs.

Clarke argues that the technologically highly developed United States has the most to lose from a large-scale cyber confrontation, both in absolute terms and especially compared to China. We are among the nations most dependent on "cyber-controlled systems." For over a decade, the Pentagon has been networking every element of the American military—from the soldiers, sensors, and (computer-controlled) robots on the ground, in the air, and at sea to commanders around the globe and every relevant node in between—with the aim of dramatically enhancing our knowledge about the enemy and making military decision-making faster and more accurate. Our intelligence services are similarly wired. And our civilian infrastructure sectors—which include banking and finance, energy, health care, telecommunications, and critical manufacturing—are both deeply computer-dependent and deeply reliant upon the Internet.

Clarke is most concerned about the security of the critical infrastructure sectors that are in private hands. He is especially worried about the privately-owned backbone telecommunications networks, over which private communications, and more than 90 percent of American military and intelligence communications, travel. These are the channels through which a cyber attack on the government and the infrastructure of the United States would come. The companies that own these networks are supposed to receive security support from the Department of Homeland Security, but DHS is "the most dysfunctional department in government" and lacks the authority or the capacity to provide real help. By contrast, Clarke notes, the Chinese government completely controls its networks, and has the full power to defend them from attack or disconnect them from the global Internet in the event of a major cyber conflict.

In these and many other ways, Clarke believes that our cyber defenses are woefully down. He proposes a three-part response, which he calls a "Defensive Triad Strategy." To address "private sector vulnerabilities to cyber war," as well as the more general problem of malware used for attacks and exploits on private and government systems alike, he would establish a system that scanned every Internet communication transiting the United States for known malware and removed any infected communications for examination and perhaps elimination. Many firms have such "intrusion prevention systems," as does the federal government in inchoate form. Clarke would have the government pay for what is in effect a vast nationwide intrusion-prevention system. But for privacy reasons, he would have private backbone providers—rather than the government—run the system.

Clarke's second initiative is to better secure the power grid, the defense of which is fundamental to the running of all computer systems. He would remove the grid from the Internet altogether and significantly raise its protections against unauthorized access. And in the third element of his defensive triad, Clarke would implement a series of detailed computer security steps to protect Department of Defense networks, which he says are an especially likely target of cyber attack. "If the Obama Administration and the Congress were to agree to harden the Internet backbone, separate and secure the controls for the power

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grid, and vigorously pursue security upgrades for Defense IT systems, we could cast doubt in the minds of potential nation-state attackers about how well they would do in launching a large-scale attack against us," Clarke says. "And even if they did attack, the Defensive Triad could mitigate the effects."

III.

There is much to agree with in Clarke's analysis, including his description of the absorption of cyber weapons into all aspects of military planning, his account of the secret cyber-arms race among nations, and his assessment of America's cyber-security weaknesses, especially in its privately owned critical infrastructure sectors. But there are problems as well. The first is with his obsessive focus on cyber war. There is little doubt that several nations have significant offensive cyber capacities that could in theory cause enormous destruction. What Clarke never adequately explains is why nations would use these weapons in this way. Yes, China is stockpiling cyber weapons and planning for cyber war. But so, too, is the United States. Capacities and contingency plans, taken alone, do not add up to a serious threat. There must also be a plausible scenario in which a nation has the motivation to use these weapons.

Clarke addresses this issue briefly, in trying to explain why China might destroy American infrastructure by means of a cyber attack even though "China's dependence on U.S. markets for its manufactured goods and the trillions the country has invested in U.S. treasury bills mean that China would have a lot to lose." His explanation is weak. He says that the United States and China might be drawn into a war over Taiwan or the oil-rich islands in the South China Sea. Perhaps. But it is hard to imagine that China would wipe out the New York Stock Exchange or the electrical grid of the East Coast unless it were in a total war over those islands—the sort of war that would also involve enormously destructive non-cyber weapons, including even nuclear weapons.

This does not mean we should stop worrying about China's offensive cyber weapons. Clarke is right that these weapons might (like China's conventional forces) deter the United States from intervening against China in a Pacific Rim contest. But he should also acknowledge that this deterrent is weakened by China's dependency on a functioning American economy, which significantly reduces the credibility of its cyber threat. It is also true, as Clarke argues, that the stealth cyber-arms race, the difficulty of knowing for sure which nation is behind a cyber attack, and the absence of norms to govern such attacks combine to create an unstable situation in which destructive cyber activities might escalate by accident. We should indeed worry about cyber war. But Clarke does not justify his central claim that cyber war is in fact the most serious cyber threat, the one we should worry most about and take the most aggressive steps to meet. His error is to focus on the worst-case cyber-war scenario without a hard-nosed assessment of its likelihood, and without comparing its expected harms, given its small likelihood, with the expected total harms from other smaller but more likely cyber threats.

A cyber-attack threat that Clarke appears to understate comes from terrorists, some of whom have powerful motives to destroy our domestic infrastructure and nothing to lose from doing so. For years the government insisted that Al Qaeda and its friends lacked the technological capacity to inflict cyber attacks and had shown no interest in doing so. "Cyber terrorism is largely a red herring," says Clarke, repeating the old government line. But some have worried that Al Qaeda might purchase cyber capabilities on the black market. And while Clarke's book was in production, the government changed its tune. In November, the FBI announced that it was investigating individuals affiliated with Al Qaeda "who have recognized and discussed the vulnerabilities of U.S. infrastructure to cyber attack, who have demonstrated an interest in elevating their computer hacking skills, and who are seeking more sophisticated capabilities from outside of their close-knit circles."

There is a good case to be made that the greatest cyber threats are not cyber-attacks by states or terrorists, but rather cyber espionage and cyber theft. Private cyber criminals are growing in numbers and sophistication, and they are causing enormous economic damage. Presumably the efficiencies of online banking and stock trading (to take two out of thousands of examples) still outweigh the costs of these criminal activities, but the balance of benefits to costs is probably shrinking. Consumer trust in online activities—an essential ingredient for successful e-commerce and more generally for the continued flourishing of the Internet—is certainly shrinking. In contrast to the very uncertain motives that states have to engage in cyber war, untold and growing thousands of cyber criminal miscreants have powerful incentives to steal from American firms, and are doing so daily.

And so, too, are states. "The extent of Chinese government hacking against U.S., European, and Japanese industries and research facilities is without precedent in the history of espionage," Clarke notes. "The secrets behind everything from pharmaceutical formulae, to bioengineering designs, to nanotechnology, to weapons systems, to everyday industrial products have been taken by the People's Liberation Army and been given to China, Inc." Clarke provides no convincing explanation why China would jeopardize this economic bonanza and its economic prosperity more generally by destroying the networks that make this massive wealth transfer possible. Nor does he explain why he thinks the serious damage caused by ongoing public and private cyber espionage and cyber theft should be less feared than the possible evils of a cyber war.

If Clarke overstates the threat of cyber war, he understates the difficulties the United States faces in meeting the cyber threat, attack and exploitation alike. Many of these difficulties result from misaligned incentives. One reason why the private infrastructure sector is so vulnerable is that companies tend to invest in levels of cyber safety that satisfy their profit aims and not in the security levels that serve the larger national interest. Another large cause of insecurity in the network is excessively buggy software. Software manufacturers could improve software security—but because they are not legally responsible for the many harms the software causes, they rush software products to market without taking the time or spending the money to ameliorate these harms. Similarly, individual home and office computer users have little incentive to take time-consuming and costly steps to stop their systems from being infiltrated and exploited as vehicles for botnet attacks on third-party military or corporate computer systems.

The government has understood these and other causes of cyber insecurity for a long time now. But despite years of public worry, it has taken practically no steps to fix them—for example, by imposing liability when buggy software injures, or by requiring Internet service providers to deny Internet access to botnet-entangled or spam-discharging computers. Clarke says that several presidential administrations have had a misplaced fear of regulating information technology firms, but the problem is more complex. Regulating

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software quality and Internet service providers will raise the costs of computer use and Internet access, perhaps dramatically. These costs would be politically controversial; and some analysts believe that they would stifle innovation and kill economic and productivity gains in ways that would outweigh the costs of plausible cyber attack and exploitation losses.

The problem goes still deeper. Every digital advance brings immediate, concrete, and often large economic and social benefits. It also brings the increased security vulnerabilities of ever-more-complex computer systems and ever-deeper reliance on these systems. But these vulnerabilities and their associated costs are mostly invisible, hard to quantify, and downstream. And so for decades the government has opted for the politically attractive and visible short-term digital gains and largely ignored the less apparent medium- and long-term security costs. This trend continues today. At the same time that the Obama administration is screaming loudly about the cyber threat, it is pushing initiatives for more bandwidth, networked smart grids, computerized health records, and next-generation air traffic control, all of which promise short-term improvements and large new security vulnerabilities.

Another fundamental obstacle to cyber security is our nation's deep skepticism about extensive government involvement in defending private computer networks. When someone enters the United States physically at the border (by air, sea, or land), or when someone physically enters a government building or a sports stadium, the government has the authority to inspect the visitor to ensure that he or she does not present a threat, and to take steps—sometimes bold ones—to ensure that a threatening visitor does not do harm. The government asserts similar authority at airport screening stations and driving checkpoints. It also asserts the power to intercept air, sea, and land attacks on critical infrastructure components such as nuclear power or chemical plants.

But these traditional security prerogatives of government do not apply in cyberspace. We have historically treated computer networks as communication and data storage systems protected by constitutional and statutory norms that strongly presume no government monitoring or interference. These same networks are now also targets and channels of public and private espionage and criminal and potentially military attack, but in general the government lacks legal access to, or potential control over, the computers and physical cables and microwave and satellite signals through which malicious attack and exploit payloads travel.

Even Clarke blanches at full government involvement in this context. He says that privately owned infrastructure sectors are our Achilles' heel, and he complains that the government is not doing enough to protect them. But in response to fears of "Big Brother spying on us," he would have private firms rather than the government run a nationwide intrusion prevention system in the telecommunication backbone. Such a system is not nearly adequate to address the cyber insecurities in the private network that Clarke identifies, for it would miss altogether "zero-day attacks" based on previously unknown vulnerabilities as well as vulnerabilities or payloads introduced in the software and hardware supply chain.

Beyond that, there is the vexing matter of the privatization of our national security. There is no reason to think that private firms alone have adequate incentives or adequate means to run a proper national intrusion-prevention system. The reasons why the government takes the lead in security against air, land, and sea attacks argue strongly for government involvement in the security of the network, doing real-time traffic analysis, real-time detection, and real-time response, in order to find and to thwart the tiny malicious digital needles hidden inside giant haystacks of billions of innocent communications that each day travel at the speed of light through the United States.

But the prospect of such government activity is a scary thought for many people, one made scarier by the fact that the technically proficient but much-feared National Security Agency would invariably be heavily involved. Yet this is precisely where the logic of Clarke's security analysis leads. And this seems also to be where the government is headed. The NSA is quietly building a one-million-square-foot cyber-security data center, at a cost of $1.5 billion, at Camp Williams in Utah. The facility's mission will, according to the NSA, include the gathering of information about cyber threats "in order to better secure the nation's infrastructure," and in particular to "learn valuable lessons that will assist the private sector . . . in securing their own networks." This government jargon suggests that the NSA already has a quiet role in domestic cyber security beyond mere protection of military networks. A major challenge for the government, and one it has not yet figured out how to accomplish, is to give the NSA wider latitude to monitor private networks and respond to the most serious computer threats while at the same time credibly establishing that the agency is not doing awful things with its access to private communications. Such credibility is hard to establish, and so the government will likely hold back until we suffer a catastrophic cyber attack.

IV.

In addition to his domestic policy ideas, and consistent with his focus on cyber war, Clarke also proposes an international cyber-arms control agreement to temper the largest threats posed by the thirty or so nations with offensive cyber-war units. His proposal is simple: a treaty ban on cyber attacks against civilian infrastructure targets but not against military targets; and no ban on cyber exploitation of any sort. This proposal is designed to dovetail with what is best for the United States. The ban on attacking civilian targets is good for us on balance, Clarke says, because we are very dependent on our insecure civilian networks; but the United States should not agree to a ban on cyber exploitation because the NSA is really good at espionage and our national security establishment depends heavily on it.

The obvious problem with such a proposal is that our adversaries' interests are usually opposed to our own. Clarke tells us that China loves juicy American civilian infrastructure targets, and that China's own civilian networks are more secure than ours and less depended on by its military. So China would gain little and lose a lot from Clarke's proposal to ban civilian infrastructure targeting, and would thus have little interest in signing on. Similarly, nations subject to NSA snooping but not good at snooping themselves would not be interested in a carve-out for state-sponsored snooping. Clarke never explains why our adversaries would, to their own detriment, agree to help the United States enhance its relative offensive and defensive cyber postures.

Here and throughout his book, Clarke is blinkered in a way that is unfortunately common in Washington discussions about the international dimensions of the cyber threat. Secretary of State Clinton wore similar blinkers in a much-acclaimed speech on "Internet freedom," in January, on the heels of the Google episode. Clinton decried cyber attacks on American economic and national security interests, and said that countries that engage in cyber attacks "should face consequences and international condemnation," and advocated for "norms of behavior among states" that encourage

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respect for the global networked commons. The problem with Clarke's and Clinton's positions lies in two related assumptions: that the United States is a major victim of the cyber threat rather than a part of the problem; and that American cyber activities abroad are legitimate while adversary cyber activities in the United States are not. Neither assumption is sound. Both are significant obstacles to international cooperation.

They are not sound because the United States is widely viewed as—and actually is—a major source of cyber attacks and a major spur to the cyber-arms race. We have among the biggest botnets that are used for cyber attacks around the globe, and we have done practically nothing to clean them up. The American government provides support for "hacktivists" who use digital tools to achieve political ends, such as circumventing content filters in networks in authoritarian states. It views these activities as benign, but the Chinese view them on a par with the Google hack. The United States has what is purportedly the most sophisticated offensive cyber-attack capability. These weapons that are now lodged in "Cyber Command," the new sub-unified combatant command under the direction of General Keith Alexander, the director of the NSA, which is itself the most powerful cyber snoop in the world. The government has not talked publicly about which aspects of our prodigious public and private offensive cyber activities it might terminate in exchange for reciprocal concessions from our adversaries, and there is no indication that it is seriously interested in the question. Until that happens, American talk of a cyber-arms agreement is empty talk.

Even if the United States did get serious about opposing points of view and possible concessions for a cyber-arms agreement, true international cooperation on cyber security is not very likely. The main reason is that attribution of any attack is slow and uncertain, and thus verification of a cyber-attack ban is hard if not impossible. Unless the attribution problem can be fixed, which few think is possible, it is hard to imagine nations (including the United States) giving up significant offensive capabilities. Clarke offers three ideas to resolve this difficulty. He would make every nation responsible for all cyber attacks on civilian targets that emerge from its borders, even if the attacks are not sponsored by that nation. The idea here is to ameliorate the attribution problem by eliminating the "it wasn't us, it was private hackers" defense that Russia and China have invoked when criticized for

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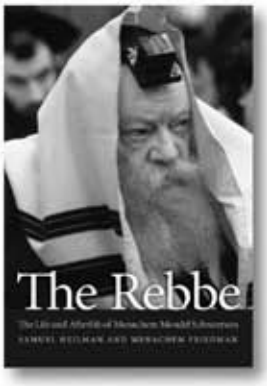

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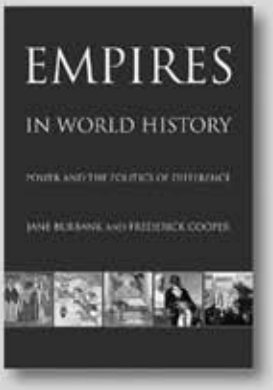

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cyber attacks from inside their borders. Clarke would also require the nation from which an attack originates to assist the nation under attack in identifying and holding responsible the bad actors. And finally he would establish an "International Cyber Forensics and Compliance Staff" to monitor and to determine compliance with these norms.

This imaginative solution is not feasible. Clarke says little about what would count as a banned "attack" or as "civilian infrastructure." Cyber weapons and cyber targets do not come packaged in ready-made categories; definitions would be hard and invariably vague, making verification and enforcement challenging on top of the attribution problem. In addition, international cooperation of the type proposed by Clarke has been worked out to only a small extent in the easier context of cyber crime among some OECD nations, and even there it is not terribly successful or helpful. It is hard to imagine that Clarke's more sovereignty-intrusive regime among more heterogeneous nations concerning a much harder and broader problem would work. Even if the attribution and verification problems could be overcome, Clarke's idea for sanctions against non-compliant nations—cutting off certain communication flows from scofflaw states, export controls, and visa denials—is both unrealistic and inadequate. And most difficult of all is Clarke's requirement that each nation take responsibility for all attacks emanating from its borders, regardless of ultimate origin or author, and assist the nation under attack. Assuming this were possible, it would require just the type of extensive and intrusive governmental activity in the private network that Clarke eschewed when thinking about domestic regulation. China would have a much easier time delivering on this promise than the United States.

Neither the known causes of cyber insecurity nor extensive worries about the cyber threat are new. The wake-up call came in 1988, when Robert Tappan Morris, a graduate student at Cornell, introduced a "worm"—a self-replicating computer program—on the Internet that was designed to determine the Net's size but that inadvertently shut down about 10 percent of the sixty thousand computers then connected to it. This event startled the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency, the futuristic Department of Defense research wing. DARPA had developed what became the Internet to ensure that the command-and-control communications of the American military could withstand nuclear attack, but suddenly its young creation seemed vulnerable from within. DARPA immediately funded a Computer Emergency Response Team, which is still located at the Carnegie Mellon Institute, to coordinate and respond to Internet-related computer security concerns.

It also asked the National Research Council to study "the security and trustworthiness" of American computing and communications systems. "We are at risk," began the subsequent NRC report, which was released in 1991. In terms remarkably similar to Clarke's, the report noted that America increasingly "depends on computers [for] power delivery, communications, aviation, and financial services," described these systems as "vulnerable … to deliberate attack," and declared that only luck had prevented their subversion. "The modern thief can steal more with a computer than with a gun," it said, adding that "tomorrow's terrorist may be able to do more damage with a keyboard than with a bomb." The report warned that the instability of the international system, and the rapid rise in both reliance on computer systems and the sophistication of computer attacks, meant that the United States was on the cusp of a cyber-security crisis. Cyber threats, it concluded, "are changing qualitatively; they are more likely to be catastrophic in impact."

The NRC report makes for sober reading today. Its basic analysis of computer-system vulnerabilities would be repeated with slight elaborations over the next two decades in a dozen subsequent NRC reports and a half-dozen high-level executive branch studies. So, too, would its warnings, which are nearly identical to contemporary cries about the cyber threat. Yet no catastrophic cyber event has occurred in the intervening twenty years, despite deeper and deeper integration of computer systems and significantly greater reliance on them in all sectors of society. This has led some to think that the cyber menace is exaggerated. But experts such as Richard Clarke continue to insist that we are on the cusp of a national security crisis related to our dependence on computer systems. "Sometimes the boy who cries wolf can see the wolf coming from a lot further than everyone else," says the man who before September 11 raised hell inside the government, to little avail, about the looming terror threat to the homeland. Let us hope that the wolf is still far away. ◆

Helen Vendler
THE ART OF ANTITHESIS

THE BARS OF ATLANTIS: SELECTED ESSAYS
By Durs Grünbein
Translated by John Crutchfield, Michael Hofmann, and Andrew Shields
(Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 323 pp., $35)

DESCARTES' DEVIL: THREE MEDITATIONS
By Durs Grünbein
Translated by Anthea Bell
(Upper West Side Philosophers, 136 pp., $25.95)

Durs Grünbein's scintillating essays flare up off the page in extravagant fashion, displaying here a philosopher (Seneca, Nietzsche), there the natural world (deep-sea fishes); here a poet (Hölderlin, Rilke), there an obsession (addictive diving). They give joy by their variety, but even more by their liveliness of expression (much of it necessarily lost in translation from the German, but much also remaining). Grünbein, a poet born in Dresden in 1962, has already created a torrent of verse and prose: a selection of his poems, translated into English by Michael Hofmann under the title *Ashes for Breakfast*, appeared in 2005, and now his American publishers have enabled us to see some of his extraordinary prose.

Grünbein's style in poetry—daring, learned, sardonic, heartfelt—is continued in the prose, not only in *The Bars of Atlantis*, a generous selection from Grünbein's remarkable essays, but also in three "meditations" appearing under the title *Descartes' Devil*, imaginatively recreating the life and thought of a philosopher dear to Grünbein's heart because he believed that thinking goes on in poetry. "I knew," Descartes said in the *Discourse on Method*, "that the wealth of ideas in poetry awakens the mind": Grünbein makes that sentence the epigraph to his little book. If the wealth of ideas in poetry awakens the mind, what cognitive claims can poetry make? And what relation do they bear to the intellectual

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claims of philosophy and its descendant, modern science? Grünbein's rich debate often issues from these questions.

Of the titles of these essays, my favorite is "Why Live Without Writing." (It is more compact in German, *Warum schriftlos leben*: the word *schriftlos* suggests a desolation that "without writing" does not). When this essay was recently published in the journal *Poetry*, it attracted the hostility of a reader who took umbrage at Grünbein's responses to the three questions inevitably (says Grünbein) put to poets: "Can you really live off it?"; "How long have you been writing for?"; and ("the trickiest one") "Why do you write?" The reader of *Poetry* thought that Grünbein was patronizing his audience; but in fact he was exploring why these questions—seemingly so simple—are impossible to answer as the listener might wish. Grünbein wittily turns the question around, offering as a response to "Why write?" the answer "Why not?"

"I don't want to frighten you," he sharply remarks, "but have you thought about what happens to people who aren't artists?" He quotes E. E. Cummings, in *The Enormous Room*, who, when a reader asks, "What do you think people who aren't artists become?" shoots back, "I feel they don't become: I feel nothing happens to them; I feel negation becomes of them." Grünbein points out that the non-artists among us are "always terribly busy but finally disappear … without a trace." The living voice of the artist, in the long run, trumps the transient voices of the non-artists of the world.

Grünbein offers three reasons of his own for writing: self-assertion, self-extension, and self-exploration:

> In writing, it is one's innermost being that tries to assert itself, paradoxically, by self-exposure.… You write … [because without writing], trammeled up in your own limited lifespan, you would always remain incomplete, half a man, so to speak.… From which it follows, third and last: you write because the brain is an endless wilderness, whose roughest terrain can be traveled only with a pencil.

It is the brain as wilderness that most enlivens Grünbein's pencil: each of his essays becomes an animated journey into that wilderness. The clear path of entry begins to branch out into other trails as the mind digresses, delights itself with analogies or anecdotes, finds another geographical terrain, and only with sudden compunction returns to the direct roadway.

The poet's characteristic fusion of incisive satire and lyric passion results in a voice at once acidic and entertaining, unpredictably imaginative and psychologically penetrating. Whether or not one agrees with Grünbein about his tastes, his accounts of poets are intuitively convincing, as he defends Rilke against Brecht, or Hölderlin against Goethe. His introduction of Hölderlin is straightforward enough until—five words from the end—the phrasing suddenly makes us sit up and take notice:

> [Hölderlin was] a man who had felt the stroke of Apollo, who one day, as he wrote in a letter to his mother, had been "hardened and consecrated" by the southern sun on the streets of France. There the waves of memory—antiquity, present, future—crashed together over his head.

Memory of the *future*? Yes. Having the past of the pagan gods in his own memory, Hölderlin already can "remember" their return:

> Hölderlin was one who believed he had actually *seen* the gods, for him alone they were again expressive forms of all-encompassing nature; his poems, by virtue of conjuring them up, are epiphanous mirrors, they resemble the telescopes used by contemporary astronomers to eavesdrop on cosmic background radiation and the creation and destruction of stars.

And those eternal gods, standing for "the universality of natural forces," would be the future as they had been the past. Grünbein's eloquence does justice to the generative radiance of art as well as to its ultimate manifestation in language or paint.

Grünbein's rapturous form of commentary springs from his own ecstatic relation to word and image, but it is not restricted to the literary: quite the opposite. For his analogies and metaphors, Grünbein is as likely to draw upon science—those astronomers' telescopes—as upon art. He plunges into the implications of the natural world, describing deep-sea fishes, who (he says, in a cascade of ungovernable similes) swim like images in the unconscious mind:

> These monstrous prototypes resemble the first pressing irons, the earliest sewing machines, phonographs, water picks, or safety razors.… Hingelike cartilage, fins notched as if by rasps and graters, rows of stiletto-sharp teeth in mouths with corsetlike braces … they are early versions [of life].… Having first appeared in time immemorial, long before the beginnings of continental time, they have always already been contemporaries [of all historical epochs].

And why do we think of the unconscious when we think of that region—"the bottom of the monstrous world," as Milton called it in *Lycidas*—in which these prototypes and archetypes dwell? Because in such grotesque forms "the archaic is combined with yesterday's modernity, the gruesome wildness of fetish masks with the futuristic metal designs of industrial production.… These little cast-iron articles [pursue], without haste or waste, the original plan of survival: disguise, cunning, pillage." The archaic deep-sea fishes stand as emblems of the biological world, in which instinct is the only drive. Virtuosic descriptions of this sort ornament page after page of Grünbein's highly original work, bringing the reader's responding senses directly into the realm of thought.

The three poles around which Grünbein's essays revolve are the natural world, the mind, and the imagination; and his deepest concern is the dwindling and withering of both the senses and the imagination in modernity. He ascribes the denigration of the imaginative—in contrast to the logical and the factual—to the fateful split, long ago, between the philosopher's search for "truth" and the senses' reach to imagination: "If Hegel is right in claiming that the true philosopher has only one fundamental idea that he returns to over and over again, then the power of imagination, the twin gifts of vividness and plasticity, were the poet's levers for perpetually unhinging this one idea." And Grünbein adds, with ironic satisfaction, that "if it's any consolation, poetry and philosophy have remained chained to each other to this day as a result of the primordial sin of their falling out."

Science, Grünbein argues, used to depend intimately on observation. "Natural history," in Linnaeus or in Darwin, not only put the intellect on its mettle; it also trained the eye and the ear, and touch and taste and smell. In the scientist's graphic recording (before photography) of his observations, natural history also trained the eye and the ear to connect to the muscles of the hand. In our day, however, the most advanced science trains its gaze on phenomena—from quarks to genes—that cannot be seen with the naked eye. "The eye goes hungry," says the

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poet, "at the feast of facts." After Darwin, we see "the march into the innermost parts of the cell, the expedition into the ghost world of chromosomes and genes." In such an environment, the formerly unbreakable link between the natural senses and the imagination becomes weakened. It is in sense-impressions that the imagination finds its metaphoric resources, but the unalerted and unstimulated senses deliver a diminished repertoire of images. If the senses become less acute, less exact, and less flexible, the imagination is hampered in its investigations; and the emotions find an impoverished representation in a mind no longer profoundly informed by sense-experience.

This lament recurs in Grünbein, as does the lament for the reduction of language to its instrumental uses. Grünbein affirms that language creates the soul. "The word is Psyche," wrote Mandelstam. Grünbein adds that "the great divide is between those who love language for its own sake and those who use it only as a tool. The source of the poet's shame is that he, too, is often compelled to *use* it." Ideally, a poem would embody a pure imaginative dynamic, in which no word would be called upon to perform a merely functional role, and all would interlock imaginatively. It is the near approach to that crystal perfection that enthralls readers of lyric poetry. For this reason, prose, which must have a larger instrumental component, brings out shame in the poet.

And yet it is a poet who has written these essays, and his imagination presides over them. Our American essays often adopt a chatty neighborly airiness; or a dull and cliché-ridden punditry; or a sanctimonious communion with nature (whether in sentimental "poetic" fashion or in the full jeremiad of alarm). There is a sameness of tone about such ruminations, even when they are worthy, that prevents their becoming part of literature. As a poet, but here too as an essayist, Grünbein has a resourceful volatility of tone, nowhere better seen than in the essay from which he draws the title of this collection: "The Bars of Atlantis: On the abyss of the imagination: A descant in fourteen descents." It is a whirlpool of fantasy, anecdote, speculation, mythology, and autobiography—a tour de force impossible to summarize but exciting to read. As Grünbein reminds us, "It is by the specific tonality—the relation of tones, sounds, and harmonies—that one recognizes the poet; it is the only thing for which he himself is responsible and that identifies him, like his own fingerprint, unrepeatable in all evolution."

What makes a poet write an essay? Or, more precisely, where did these essays originate? Several were called forth by various occasions: three arise from the awarding to Grünbein of the Friedrich Nietzsche Prize, the Friedrich Hölderlin Prize, and the Georg Büchner Prize. Another marked Grünbein's election to the German Academy for Language and Poetry. The essays are drawn from Grunbach's several prose collections in German: those are (with titles translated by the editor Michael Eskin) *Galilei Measures Dante's Hell and Gets Stuck on the Measurements* (1996); *The First Year: A Berlin Diary* (2001); *Why Live Without Writing* (2003); *Antique Dispositions* (2005); and *The Poem and Its Secret* (2007). Although the editor has grouped the essays collected here into five categories, beginning with the more autobiographical pieces and ending with three essays on classical authors (Seneca, Petronius, and Juvenal), they can be read in any order, from the slightest to the weightiest. Their essential qualities are constant: vivacity of style, intelligence of mind, and vividly imaginative expression—and often, in the pages that began as lectures, a fierce colloquiality of diction.

Grünbein's values are pre-Christian ones: "The Christian siren song [has] for centuries distracted from the classical texts." To discover the human before it was entranced by Christianity is one purpose of Grünbein's essays on Latin writers, and his investigation of the life and beliefs of the Stoic philosopher Seneca in an essay called "In the Name of Extremes: On the Brevity of Life." His eulogy of Latin poetry ("all critique of the verbal craft came to me from there") is also an elegy for what has disappeared:

> It was the taut and relentless quality of Latin verse that captivated me, its aesthetic style, manifested from the tightly fitted grammar, from the interplay of these syntactic units, locked as it were into one another like toothy gears.... The poetic word in Latin approached me like something quasi-objective, as a sculpture made of syllables.... Ancient poetry can be thought only in multiple voices, as a physical polytheism. Nothing was excluded, not one of the drives was left without speech.

"Not one of the drives was left without speech": the sentence could serve as a brief guide to Grünbein's own poetics. If poetry is "a probe into the as-yet-unfamiliar zones of consciousness," giving visibility to the hitherto invisible, then one understands Grünbein's homage to Nietzsche, who wrote in a letter that "thinking in visible and tactile processes, not in thoughts; therein consists what is truly poetic." Grünbein continues, "Philosophizing means following the god of brainpower, Apollo, the Bringer of Light. Whoever composes poems, by contrast, places himself at the mercy of Dionysus, who leads us into the dense thicket of our drives."

This is an old contrast; but Grünbein must know that he himself writes a densely intellectual poetry which is generated by the lyre of Apollo as well as by the thyrsus of Dionysus. If poetry, as he says, is "an art whose entire purpose it is to set off fireworks in the reader's psyche," still he does not forget the obsessive arrangements of language and image that ignite the fireworks. Nor does he forget that it is not poets alone who make forays into the "still unsecured galleries" of our "intractable psychic cave system": "Poetic thinking ... is not the exclusive domain of poets and literati; rather, it is a method used by many small search parties ... an army of phenomenologists working on expanding the confines of our shared imaginaries."

Grünbein is aware of, and dejected by, the unimportance of poetry to the contemporary intellectual world:

> When the average intellectual today reflects on the artistic and intellectual achievements of the last century, he first thinks of such names as Freud and Picasso, Stravinsky and Heisenberg, Hitchcock and Wittgenstein. Impossible to imagine that a poet should be among them. Not a single poet from the ancestral gallery of the likes of Pessoa, Cavafy, Rilke, Yeats, Mandelstam, Valéry, Frost, and Machado will cross the mind of the historically minded thinker, who claims to understand what modernity is all about. It is as if the art of poetry, of all things, were the blind spot in the cultural memory of modern man.

The "Great Books" courses, ideologically inserted into university curricula during World War II to preach citizenship and morality, never included nonnarrative poetry: Homer, yes; Yeats, no. Lyric poetry as a pursuit and investigation of human consciousness has been presented as an emotional rather than an intellectual medium. Grünbein blames "the fickleness of memory itself, which obliterates everything that hasn't been put to use in the service of power,

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technology, capital, ideology, or physical force," but he remains undaunted in his confidence in the ultimate staying power of the word. As he courses rapidly through many subjects, always pointing, defining, and exhibiting, he displays some of the evangelism we associate with Whitman, who could not believe that the glories and miseries of the world, natural and human, could so often escape human notice. Like Whitman, Grünbein is sure that he has only to pluck his reader by the sleeve and the reader will listen, eager to be awakened to the perceptions of a noticing mind and heart.

Grünbein's most winning recollection of his own career in noticing the phenomena of the world comes in a charming essay called "Childhood in the Diorama." He is six years old here, spending the summer with his grandparents. His grandfather takes him to the natural history museum, where the child is enraptured by the dioramas of scenes in various climates:

> What to my grandfather was at best a copy, a piece of jungle nicely imitated and about as interesting as the window display in a fur shop, was to me identical with the nature outside. This was exactly how I'd always imagined the Arctic wastes, where polar bears live. Wasn't this the view you had standing on the deck of an icebreaker bound for the North Pole? And this vegetation, typical of Amazonian regions, was this not the actual rain forest in whose tangles you lost your way choked by lianas, punctured by poisonous vipers? … The animals, secretly observed from behind bent twigs, frozen in a clearing—long before I knew what an epiphany was, they gave me a feeling of ecstasy and followed me into my dreams.

Picture books, dioramas, and the exotic real kindle into a single perception in the six-year-old poet to be. And the present Grünbein—conveying the sensations of diving, describing the suicide of Seneca, inhabiting a painting by Jan Steen—retains the astonishment of childhood in his language. But Grünbein is not always in his storytelling mode. In his very satisfying essays on poetry, he does not abandon his love of hyperbole and his rhetorical momentum, but he does tame them into a more melodic prose. In poetry, he says,

> the retina touches the speech centers, the acoustic nerve grazes the centers for movement and rhythm, and everything together roots as over a limbic weave in precognitive animal zones, closer to fear, pleasure, and aggression. And every so often it looks out *mit grossem Tierblick*—with a grand animal gaze.… The poetic text is the protocol of an inner gazing.… Behind the semantic organization there is always an anatomical one.

In any sphere—description, anecdote, memoir, analysis—Grünbein's native ground is antithesis, a figure of speech or of thought that carries, along with its high drama, a risk of oversimplification. It is dialectically useful to pose philosophy against poetry (while insisting on their mutual entanglement), but the dice of the poet's antitheses are sometimes loaded, as in his comparison of two paintings he sees as an adolescent in the Gemäldegalerie in Dresden: Raphael's *Sistine Madonna* and Giorgione's *Sleeping Venus*. The Dresden that he recalls was still part of the German Democratic Republic, the communist East Germany, and in the museum a docent explains the Raphael to the children:

> Because the subject was art education and the country where the scene was taking place saw itself as a worker-and-peasant state, her enthusiasm soon turns into grim pedagogy. Now the talk is of feudal rule, of paintings commissioned by that terrible kraken the Church, and of religion as opium for the people.

But the adolescent Grünbein prefers, not surprisingly, the Giorgione sleeping nude to the apotheosized Madonna:

> Against Venus's reticence, against this inscrutable dreaming face and the flawless, apricot-colored body … the barefoot country girl [the Sistine Madonna] on her high pedestal of clouds had no chance at all. Madonna and Venus, what an odd pair.… Even today, we still feel the force of liberation emanating from this Venus, the ultramodern thrust of its recourse to pagan mythology.

Granted, there is some irony in this recollection of adolescence, but it is odd of Grünbein to base his judgment so absolutely on content. And it is odd to use the Madonna to generate a jeering fantasy about masturbating clerics: "It is not hard to imagine what use [the monks] made of this painted paean to Mary." On a return

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visit, the poet sees the whole painting as discolored by its varnish, and the jeer returns: "Beneath her heavy layers of varnish, the poor *Madonna* looked as if she had spent a long time hanging in a chimney beside other hams." When Grünbein's exuberance turns to cartoon, his appetite for antithesis can perhaps take the blame.

Or perhaps the blame should be ascribed to the long exacerbation of youth under the control of a repressive and dangerous regime, to the immersion in a hateful history that one was powerless to change. In the most striking of the anecdotes of his youth, Grünbein, waking up on the day after Gorbachev's visit and the mass demonstrations that presaged the fall of the GDR, finds himself astonished by the sight of a tank left sitting on the median of one of East Berlin's broad avenues. "Its turret, painted with the emblems of the GDR's National People's Army, was screwed down, the cannon pointed across the roadway toward Alexanderplatz," he recalls:

> I was suddenly overcome by a desire to lie down, right there, in the shadow of the tank.... The body had come this far, now it sought rest, a break from history. It had had enough of ... the long socialist twilight, the lethargy of an entire landscape which that body had blundered into by accident as if into a giant trap.... I wanted ... to forget the powerlessness, the physiological dictatorship, and all the years of collective humiliation.... I wanted to oversleep history, just this once ... to forget the body in a dreamless sleep.

But Grünbein did not sleep: far from sinking into lethargy, he rose up at the young age of twenty-five in a marvelous fury of composition, pouring forth poems and essays, and, most recently, both *Descartes' Devil* and a long epic about Descartes in Sweden. He refuses to give up the attempt to confront the lifelong standoff between perception and thought, imagination and truth. If Yeats's aim was to hold in a single thought reality and justice, then Grünbein's is to hold in a single thought poetry and philosophy. ◆

David A. Bell

POGROMS OF WORDS

FOR THE SOUL OF FRANCE: CULTURE WARS IN THE AGE OF DREYFUS
By Frederick Brown
(Knopf, 304 pp., $28.95)

The phrase "culture wars" has a peculiarly contemporary and American sound. Its very hyperbole captures something about our over-excited political culture. It summons up images of Sarah Palin denouncing liberal elites to the Tea Party convention, or of hippies facing off against riot police. It triggers associations with a series of "hot button" American issues: gay marriage, abortion, gun control, prayer in schools.

Yet "culture wars" are in fact endemic to Western modernity. They may be defined as conflicts that divide a country less along regional, confessional, racial, economic, or even ideological lines than according to more inchoate but easily grasped disagreements over basic values, assumptions, and beliefs. The long-standing Russian disputes between Westernizers and Slavophiles qualify as a culture war. Germany came close to inventing the phrase with its *Kulturkampf* ("culture struggle") of the late nineteenth century, although that particular battle had a distinctly confessional and anti-Catholic accent. And it certainly fits modern France. It was in 1820 that the historian Augustin Thierry memorably observed that "we believe we are one nation, but we are actually two nations on the same soil, two nations at war in their memories and irreconcilable in their hopes for the future."

Of course, those who bemoan culture wars are usually waging them at the same time, and Thierry himself offers a good illustration. He may have been commenting on the harsh divisions that persisted even after the Revolutionary and Napoleonic traumas, but he was also helping to deepen them, through a particularly corrosive variety of historical mythmaking. A secular liberal, he meant "two nations" in the most literal possible sense, for he cast his conservative aristocratic enemies as literal aliens—invading "Franks" who had remained racially distinct from and socially opposed to the country's native Gauls since late antiquity. His solution to the problem of France's culture wars was simple: victory over the intruders.

By the late nineteenth century, few French people still believed that they could trace their problems directly back to the fifth century. But the country's culture wars were still very much in progress, and Frederick Brown is quite right to use the phrase in the subtitle of his wonderful book. In fact, France's great modern culture wars arguably stretched over an even longer period, taking shape before the French Revolution and lasting into the mid-twentieth century.

Of course, the genealogy of the contending parties is anything but clear. Resisters and Vichyites were not the same thing as Dreyfusards and anti-Dreyfusards, who in turn differed from mid-nineteenth-century republicans and legitimists, Restoration-era liberals and "ultras," revolutionary Jacobins and counter-revolutionaries, and the *philosophes* and anti-*philosophes* of the Enlightenment. Yet there were still strong continuities, which the participants themselves recognized. At any moment, France had millions of inhabitants who saw their country as the natural home of reason, of Enlightenment, of science, and of cosmopolitan openness to the world. And it had millions of others who insisted it was properly a land of Catholic faith and mission, of monarchical tradition, and of a closed, organic social structure. Between the two sides, there was rarely much common ground.

As Brown shows, the late nineteenth century saw two major—and related—shifts in the country's long cultural quarrel. The first was the consolidation of the secular Republic. Between 1789 and 1871, France had lurched erratically back and forth between monarchy, republic, and Bonapartist empire, experiencing three revolutions, five coups d'état, and two regime-changing military debacles in the process, as well as countless smaller insurrections. The constitution changed so often that, according to a long-standing joke, the French National Library kept its copies in the "periodicals" section.

In 1870–1871, Napoleon III's Second Empire collapsed after its humiliating defeat in the Franco-Prussian War, and even as the victors proclaimed the new German Empire in the Hall of Mirrors at Versailles, politicians in Paris founded the Third Republic. It got off to an extremely rocky start: in the spring of 1871, Parisian radicals rebelled against it and created the alternative government of the Commune, which the Republic bloodily suppressed. For several years thereafter, a conservative legislature seemed

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on the verge of restoring the monarchy yet again, only to have the project founder on the intransigence of the pretender to the throne, the feeblest of the Bourbons, who refused to reign under the Revolution's tricolor flag. Republicans also averted the threat of yet another coup, by the charismatic general Georges Boulanger, and by the 1890s the regime finally seemed to rest on solid ground. Its supporters meanwhile proceeded with an ambitious program to remove the Catholic Church from public life, establishing a system of free, state-run primary education and then, in 1905, formally separating church and state.

The opponents of the Republic never accepted its legitimacy, but increasingly—and this is the second shift that Brown recounts—they found another target for their outrage. In 1886, a third-rate journalist named Édouard Drumont published *La France juive*, or *Jewish France*, which became one of the greatest best-sellers in French history, going through 140 editions in just two years and making the fortune of the Flammarion publishing house. France had of course known anti-Semitism before, but in the 1880s it began to take on an astonishing new virulence, and became ever more central to French life.

Drumont and his followers spun out bizarre and tortuous conspiracy theories, eventually involving a secret Jewish syndicate they dubbed the Sanhedrin, and a secret rabbinic association called the Kahal, supposedly bent on world domination. (The idea helped to inspire the Russian secret police's Elders of Zion.) When a prominent bank, closely linked to conservatives and the church, went bankrupt in 1882, the anti-Semites blamed Jewish financiers. When an early French-financed attempt to dig a canal in Panama collapsed amid scandal a few years later, with some Jewish figures playing a role, it was a "Jewish disaster." Drumont founded a newspaper, *La libre parole*, to advance his views, and everywhere it found evidence of further Jewish plots. When a flood drove Drumont out of his Paris apartment in 1910, he blamed it on deforestation financed by cousins of the Rothschilds.

His message spread throughout the country, relayed in large part by Catholic clergy. "We are being pillaged, dishonored, exploited, and emptied by the Jew," Brown quotes, almost at random, from a diocesan newsletter. "Servile, slithering, artful, filthy, and vile when he is the weaker one, he becomes arrogant when he has the upper hand, as he does now. The Jew is our master.... When one of these vultures swoops down on the finances of a people, he pilfers, ransoms, tears, flays, strangles." In this mephitic climate, it is hardly surprising that when the French intelligence services came across evidence of a high-placed German mole in the French army in 1894, suspicion immediately fell on a Jewish officer.

Army officials quickly conducted a kangaroo court-martial of Alfred Dreyfus, failing to disclose exculpatory evidence. Dreyfus received a life sentence, to be served on Devil's Island, where such sentences were usually short. And then, what had started as a simple, albeit egregious miscarriage of justice turned into the Affair. As the extent of official misconduct became clear, in large part thanks to the heroic efforts of Dreyfus's family, desperate officers brazenly forged further evidence against him. They even went so far as to protect the real mole, Ferdinand Esterhazy, when his guilt became apparent, to preserve the honor of the army. The question of Alfred Dreyfus dominated headlines and public discussion, divided families, and seemed once again to threaten the Republic's survival. It took many years, a tortuous series of trials, and an unprecedented campaign for public opinion—exemplified by the Dreyfusard Émile Zola's *J'accuse*, his famous open letter to the president of the Republic—before Dreyfus finally won exoneration in 1906.

But the real significance of the Dreyfus Affair derives from the torrent of sheer smoking venom that flowed from the mouths and the pens of the anti-Dreyfusards. A few years ago the French sociologist and historian Pierre Birnbaum skillfully demonstrated its full, horrifying extent in a book called *The Anti-Semitic Moment*. In virtually every corner of the country, Jews were vilified and threatened, and mobs paraded in the street calling for their deaths. An Anti-Semitic League founded by Drumont flourished, with hundreds of branches throughout France. Outside observers reacted with horror, including the Austrian Jewish journalist Theodor Herzl, who drew the lesson that Jews could live normal lives only in a homeland of their own, and went on to found the Zionist movement.

For French Jews themselves, the Dreyfus Affair had a more ambiguous conclusion. After all, Dreyfus was finally vindicated. Justice, and the Republic, prevailed in the end. And despite the outpouring of anti-Semitism, the Affair led to surprisingly little bloodshed. In metropolitan France, not a single Jew lost his life, although two were killed in French Algeria. Fittingly enough for this most verbal of countries, the Dreyfus Affair was a pogrom of words. Still, the place of the Jews in France hardly seemed secure. As historians have often remarked, at the turn of the twentieth century, the European country that seemed most likely to perpetrate a holocaust was not Germany or Austria, but France.

Frederick Brown devotes the longest chapter of his learned book to the Dreyfus Affair, and rightly so, for it was by far the greatest battle in these culture wars. Brown does not enter into debate with other historians, or offer opinions on the largest historical issues posed by the affair—for instance, whether this new anti-Semitic moment differed in fundamental ways from earlier waves of European Jew-hatred. He is content to tell the story, cogently and clearly. His narrative, though, certainly suggests a connection between anti-Semitism and the consolidation of the Republic. It notes that contemporaries themselves saw Jews as symbols of the Republican order, and anti-Semitism as a stalking horse for its opponents (in the words of the anarchist Louise Michel, as "a pretext by means of which monarchist Catholics might put the Republic in mortal danger"). But he lets readers draw their own conclusions.

He follows much the same strategy in the rest of the book. He does not try to give an exhaustive history of French cultural conflict in the late nineteenth century. Instead, he offers readers a somewhat meandering but consistently instructive series of episodes and sketches, starting with the controversies around Ernest Renan's attempt to write a "historical" life of Jesus, in the 1860s, which scandalized observant Catholics. He gives short, vivid chapters on the financial scandals, some fine sketches of individual personalities, and a remarkable chapter on the way a tragic fire in a pavilion built for charitable fund-raising temporarily brought a truce in the culture wars, only for animosities to burst out again quickly amongst the mourners. He concludes with the stark contrast between a gala "banquet of science" held in 1895, and another banquet five years later in honor of the conservative writer Maurice Barrès. The latter included a speech by a conservative journalist who praised "virtuous violence," and insisted that "beating a sick man bloody is better than leaving him to rot." France was still very much two nations in one, and the risk of the culture wars turning real seemed as high as ever.

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There are a few strange omissions. Brown might have devoted some space to the outlandish shrine of Lourdes, with its massive pilgrimages and alleged miracle cures, which took on huge significance for Catholics under the Third Republic. In her splendid book *Lourdes*, Ruth Harris left no doubt about the central role the shrine played in the period's culture wars, while also highlighting the extraordinary scenes that took place there: for instance, priests deliberately drinking water from pools filled with desperate pilgrims' pus, blood, and scabs in order to show the power of faith over science. She noted that Henri Lasserre's *Notre-Dame de Lourdes*, with a million copies in print, outsold even Drumont's *La France juive*. Brown also pays surprisingly little attention to France's acquisition of a vast overseas empire during this period. Conflicts between Catholic missionaries abroad and the Republic's famous "civilizing mission" ensured that the French culture wars spilled over to large areas of Africa and other parts of the world as well (although at times there was also surprising cooperation). Brown does observe, though, that the Paris World Fair of 1878 grotesquely included "several hundred 'indigenous people'" who "spent six months in a human zoo called the Negro Village."

As befits the author of celebrated lives of Flaubert and Zola, Brown is at his best in biographical mode. He does particularly well with the industrious, methodical engineer Gustave Eiffel, creator of the eponymous tower. As the book reminds us, initially the Eiffel Tower received as much criticism as applause, and not only from the surprisingly numerous artists who denounced it as "an odious column of bolted metal." The project originally came about as part of an exhibition marking the centenary of the French Revolution, and celebrating the triumph of reason and science. And as its frame rose high above the city, it all too obviously challenged the other great Parisian construction project of the period: the lugubrious Basilica of the Sacred Heart, or Sacré-Coeur, which was beginning to loom over the city from the heights of Montmartre. (It was not finished until 1914.) The Catholic Church originally conceived of Sacré-Coeur as a reminder of and "expiation" for the city's sins during the Commune, when the city's archbishop was taken hostage and then shot.

Brown has a particularly brilliant sketch of Georges Boulanger, the charismatic and vainglorious general who came close to seizing power at the end of the 1880s. Boulanger initially posed not as a combatant in France's culture wars but as an "apolitical" solution to them, and in this regard he resembled a succession of generals who tried to play similar roles throughout modern French history, Bonaparte and De Gaulle most successfully. French republicans and monarchists alike have historically distrusted populist appeals to the crowds, preferring to put their faith in impersonal institutions. But Boulanger, like Bonaparte, defied these conventions, highlighting his own heroic life story (including feats of derring-do in Algeria and Indochina, and a serious wound incurred during the Italian War of Independence), and making carefully planned appearances astride a splendid black charger. As Brown nicely remarks, he knew how to create "the illusion of depth."

The figure of the charismatic general in politics actually came closer to the nineteenth-century American political model than to the French—and not coincidentally, as Brown notes, Boulanger formed many of his political ideas during a visit to the United States in 1881. "When left alone," Brown writes, "he concluded that Jacksonian democracy worked better than French republicanism." By the end of the decade, however, Boulanger had lost faith in democracy of any sort, and slipped closer to the far right. His story ended farcically, as his opponents charged him with attempting to subvert the Republic and embezzling money from the War Ministry, and his political movement quickly collapsed. In

Sisypha Retires

Not pushing a rock—
like my husband, of erstwhile fame, Sisyphus,
I had been pulling him—a dead night-weight
on my chest—pulling the way sailors heave
up a three-thousand-pound mast so my fingers
had permanent rope-burn—pulling him to be
father, lover, other than self-
obsessed in his colossal task.
He would never rest. Always pushing
that stone, he became a stone. Sometimes
he called it the mind meditating; other times
he called it the weight of the world's tears
and he—only he—could blot them dry.
Little did I know he drank those tears—thrived on them.
So when I stopped crying, he stopped lifting me.

Then my work began of pulling—my son put to work—we both
began yanking—dragging—luring his father away from that
anonymous ball of grief—my son pulling with chess pieces—
a baseball—his own monkey antics. I with lower-cut dresses. We yanked.
We tugged. We strained. We lugged till our hearts
beat into our lungs a Siren song. But we only saw
the back of his neck—the bristled head pushing out the door
pushing the air-like-granite pushing, finally, into another
woman—heaving her up the hill of his might
as we stayed below, encamped where his feet had been,
puling (puking into a pail) though by now his ears are stoppered.

So what could we do but let the line go—stop tugging at his back.
Our arms and legs muscle-bound. Our faces, for once,

out of his shadow have turned toward the unobstructed sun
and each other, the burden of his gravity lifted, we are beginning

to dance-as-though-swimming

to walk-as-though-floating.

SHARON DOLIN

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1891, stricken by grief at the death of his mistress, he traveled to her graveside in Brussels, leaned back against her tombstone, and blew his brains out.

Boulanger could not bring the culture wars to an end. Neither could Dreyfus's vindication in 1906. And despite a so-called "holy union" in 1914–1918, neither could World War I, which Brown briefly discusses at the very end of his book. In fact, in the 1920s and 1930s the conflicts turned viciously and destructively ideological, with the rise of the French Communist Party, the formation of various fascist and reactionary groups, and a right-wing attempt to overthrow the Republic in 1934. The culture wars ended only when the Catholic monarchist right made its pact with the devil under Vichy, not only accepting Nazi rule but also taking advantage of it to make a final reckoning with its enemies, notably the Jews. Vichy authorities arrested and deported some 76,000 Jews, nearly all of whom died in the extermination camps. The liberation in 1944 left these culture warriors largely discredited, and despite occasional stirrings since then, the battles of the age of Dreyfus are well and truly over.

Since 1944, in fact, France has known a remarkable degree of cultural consensus. This does not always appear obvious from the American media's coverage of the country, which mostly seems to feature riots, protests, and strikes. But vocal opposition to government reforms, such as the recent attempts to shake up higher education, or to loosen labor laws, amounts in large part to a traditional form of French political theater, and does not point to any fundamental division over values, assumptions, or beliefs. Catholicism, a principal player in the older culture wars, has a shockingly small place in French public life today. In one recent poll, only slightly more than half the population described themselves as even nominally Catholic. Gay rights and abortion evoke very little passion, as compared to the United States. Neither does the large role taken by government throughout society, including in areas such as health care.

To be sure, the problems related to immigrant populations, and particularly the challenge posed by radical Islam, have generated tremendous anxieties. But with the exception of a relatively small minority, most French people agree in general terms about the need to "integrate" these populations. If the Muslim population continues its present rate of expansion (a doubtful proposition), and if radical Islam flourishes within it, then a new and virulent set of culture wars could well break out in the future, as Christopher Caldwell has warned. But for the moment, thankfully, this future is anything but assured.

So France is no longer the "two nations on the same soil" that Augustin Thierry described almost two centuries ago. Thierry's essay itself now appears somewhat ironic, for it was mostly not about France at all, but about the United States. Thanks to the American Revolution, Thierry argued, "America has expelled from its shores the nation that claimed to rule over it," and therefore achieved the sort of ethnic unity and freedom that the divided French could only dream of. But the two countries' more recent history has demonstrated all too clearly that culture wars are not merely the remnants of ancient ethnic animosity. They can bubble up from within a seemingly homogeneous, consensual body politic, and split it dangerously apart. It is happening all too obviously in the United States today, and as a result Thierry's lament about "two nations on the same soil" is now our own. We must hope that the divisions begin to heal before our culture wars turn as vicious and ugly as the ones that Frederick Brown has described. Or has that already happened? ◆

István Deák
A DEAL WITH THE DEVIL

EMISSARY OF THE DOOMED: BARGAINING FOR LIVES IN THE HOLOCAUST
By Ronald Florence
(Viking, 336 pp., $27.95)

I.

March 18, 1944 was an unusually pleasant spring day in Budapest, with crowds filling the outdoor cafés: it was difficult to tell that Hungary was at war. Rumors were spread about the government's secret negotiations with the Western Allies, and all surmised that an unspoken agreement existed according to which the Hungarians would not fire on American and British aircraft overflying the country and the enemy aircraft would not drop any bombs. Hungary, of course, was still Germany's partner in the military campaign against Bolshevism, but ever since the annihilation of the Hungarian expeditionary force at the Don River in the winter of 1942, the troops did behind-the-front duty only, fighting the partisans, and only some of them. Ukrainian and Polish nationalist guerrillas were tolerated and sometimes even supported in their struggles against the Nazis and the Bolsheviks.

At home, more food was to be had in the stores, and on the black market, than in Berlin, not to speak of Paris. Amazingly, while 60,000 Hungarian Jews had already died either at the front as unarmed labor servicemen or as victims of various atrocities, and while the rights and livelihoods of the remaining 800,000 persons who were Jews by religion or by descent had been restricted in many ways, they could still go about their daily business, live in their own homes, send their children to public schools, rent a room in most hotels, eat in any restaurant, go to the theater and the swimming pools, and sit on a park bench. Less than two hundred miles away, in Vienna, all this was out of the question; in fact, thousands of Austrian Jews had long since been gassed.

On the evening of March 18, one of Hungary's wealthiest businessmen, a nobleman of Jewish descent—as were many of the industrial captains, bankers, and great businessmen—gave a lavish party in honor of his daughter at which even a few young army officers in uniform made their appearance. It was on the way home, in the early hours of the morning, that some guests learned of German tanks crossing the Hungarian border. In a few hours the country's occupation was complete, and with the exception of a single democratically minded parliamentary deputy who fired his pistol at the Gestapo men who came to arrest him, no one resisted the takeover. Admiral Regent Miklós Horthy, who was Hungary's uncrowned king, and who a few months earlier categorically rejected Hitler's request that the country's Jews be handed over to Germany for extermination, now appointed a cabinet from the right wing of the conservative so-called Government Party.

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The new government immediately went into high gear so as to finally "solve the Jewish question." While the regent washed his hands of the whole affair, the authorities—from the prime minister down to the superintendents of apartment buildings—proceeded to humiliate, rob, and isolate the Jews. The same police officers who, a few months earlier during the High Holidays, directed traffic in front of the great Dohány Street Synagogue, resplendent in their shining gala helmets and white gloves, now grabbed Jews in the street and handed them over to the Gestapo, or dumped them into internment camps. Even though the Red Army was nearing the Hungarian frontier and mass mobilization was proclaimed to fight the enemy, the administrative apparatus spent most of its energy and time confiscating Jewish buildings, apartments, bank accounts, jewelry, telephones, radios, cars, bicycles, dogs, horses, and stamp collections. Jews in the countryside were herded into walled ghettos, where their stays turned out to be shorter than the amount of time required to devise the cruel rules regulating their existence: in May and June, about 420,000 of Hungary's Jews were deported to Auschwitz. Two-thirds were gassed immediately on arrival, while many of the rest perished subsequently.

Yet all were not lost: in early July there were more than 200,000 Jews alive in the Hungarian capital, and well over 100,000 Jewish men between the ages of eighteen and forty-eight doing labor service for the Hungarian army. Surprisingly, the military had just then decided to declare the labor servicemen prisoners of war—a declaration profoundly degrading to the highly assimilated and patriotic Jews, thousands of whom had fought for the country during World War I. In reality, however, their POW status would prove to be an effective protection—at least until the SS/Arrow Cross putsch in October 1944—against the Gestapo, the SS, and the Hungarian civilian authorities. Why the once wildly anti-Semitic high command of the army chose to act this way, and why it went so far as to pull young men off the deportation trains, is still a mystery. But the overfilled cattle cars carried mainly women, older men, and children to Auschwitz. The majority of them were killed; but the majority of able-bodied Jewish men survived the war.

In another good turn of events, on July 7, Regent Horthy, yielding to the entreaties of neutral countries and his conservative aristocratic advisers, as well as to his own fear that the Allies would bomb a *Judenrein* Budapest into rubble, forbade deportations from the capital. It turned out to be a temporary but still valuable reprieve. Nor was this all: well before the beginning of the deportations—in fact, a few days after the German invasion of Hungary—curious negotiations began between the newly arrived Gestapo, led by SS Lieutenant Colonel Adolf Eichmann, and a handful of Jewish Zionists. The subject of the talks was the sale of Hungarian Jews to the Western Allies. Or as Eichmann himself liked to say, the issue was "blood for goods." Although the protracted negotiations saved the lives of only a few thousand Jews, the fact that the talks occurred at all led to the postwar belief—or better, the postwar illusion—that much more could have been done.

It is one of the many ironies of history that while at the end of the war 500,000 men, women, and children, or about two-thirds of the Hungarian Jews, were dead, the Gestapo itself did not kill any of its Zionist negotiating partners, some of whom brazenly defied even the terrible Eichmann. The few Zionist negotiators who did not survive the war fell victim not to the Germans but to the Hungarian authorities. No less astonishingly, the vague promises, half-truths, and outright lies that the brave but totally powerless and not particularly brilliant Zionists produced for their Gestapo, SS, and Abwehr partners led to the eventual involvement in the negotiations of many other Nazi leaders, including Heinrich Himmler, and indirectly even the Führer. The Hungarian government and police, the Turkish government, the British high command in the Near East, the Jewish Agency in Palestine, the world Jewish organizations, the British foreign secretary, the American War Refugee Board, and the intelligence and counter-intelligence services of numerous countries were all eventually involved in the talks as well.

The incredibly complex discussions between a few ordinary-looking middle-class Jews and the strutting, arrogant, and contemptuous uniformed mass murderers of the SS form the basis of Ronald Florence's eminently readable history. His is not the first book on the subject, but it is definitely the easiest to absorb by anyone wishing to gain an overall impression of these dark and remarkable developments. In addition, the book offers specific information on one particular individual, Joel (Jenő) Brand, who is its central character. Unfortunately, the book contains many misspellings, especially of Hungarian names and placenames, as well as numerous factual mistakes, none of them devastating, but still including assertions such as that Stalin was present at the January 1943 Casablanca Conference attended by Roosevelt, Churchill, and De Gaulle. Perhaps painstaking accuracy is too much to ask from an author who has published quite a few novels as well as writings on such diverse topics as T. E. Lawrence and Aaron Aaronson, two heroes in British service during World War I in the Middle East; the Damascus blood libel trial of 1840; two great American astronomical observatories; the daughters of Karl Marx; and the Austrian Social Democratic leader Friedrich Adler. So it is worth pointing out that in addition to Florence's useful book, there are also such impeccable scholarly works on the subject as Yehuda Bauer's *Jews for Sale? Nazi-Jewish Negotiations, 1933–1945* and Randolph L. Braham's *The Politics of Genocide: The Holocaust in Hungary*, both published in 1994.

As Bauer demonstrates, contacts between Nazis and Zionists dated back to at least 1933. At that time the two enemies perversely shared a common goal: the massive departure of Jews from Germany and, if possible, from the entire European continent, as well as the creation of a Jewish national home outside Europe. The two disagreed on where that national home should be: the Germans, like the British, had no desire to alienate the Muslims in general and the Arabs in particular by settling the Jews in Palestine. Instead the Germans had a big plan for sending the Jews of Europe to the island of Madagascar, a harebrained project which other countries as well as the Zionists rejected.

At first, as Bauer shows, there was genuine cooperation between the two partners, allowing wealthy German Jews to leave for Palestine by taking as many German goods with them as they could afford and hoped to be able to sell, thus opening the market for German products in the Middle East. But until the beginning of the Final Solution in 1941, one can hardly talk of a concrete, unified German plan regarding the Jews: whatever pleased the SS, for instance, was automatically opposed by the German Foreign Ministry. What made any concerted action possible was that the Nazi leaders, no matter how much they disagreed among themselves on Jewish policy, were united in

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believing in their own propaganda regarding Jewish world domination. They saw in the Zionists the representatives of world Jewry, and in world Jewry the real rulers of Great Britain, the United States, and the Soviet Union. As Florence richly proves, reality was vastly different: Jewish political influence on the great powers was very limited, even non-existent.

Moreover, the Jews disagreed among themselves about their own interests. Some believed that they should gain security through patriotism and faithful service to their home countries. Some, especially in the Yishuv in Palestine, went so far as to consider the British occupier and not the Nazis their main enemy. And some, who were in British service, bitterly combated the radically nationalist Jews. On the question of how best to help fellow Jews in the grip of the Third Reich, the confusion was even greater. The two great Western powers would not hear of a policy specifically designed to save Jewish lives: all individual and group interests were to be subordinated to the supreme goal of total military victory. As for the Soviets, they perceived no particular Jewish tragedy, only the tragedy of peoples subjugated by fascist Germany and other capitalist-imperialist powers. Liberation from the fascist yoke was to be accomplished through the united struggle of progressive peoples under the leadership of the communist parties and the Soviet Union.

Only the powerless Zionists in Bratislava, Budapest, Bucharest, and elsewhere were keen on taking immediate steps to save Jewish lives, including their own. What made these steps possible was that by 1944, unlike in the first years of the Final Solution, the Nazis were divided on their policy toward the Jews. As executors of the Final Solution, the SS were split between those who continued to advocate total annihilation and those who preferred periodic negotiations, so as to help the German war effort and to line their own pockets, and—in the last stage of the war—to save their own skin. Sometimes the division seemed to exist within the same person—Himmler, for example, pursued the goal of annihilation together with a plan to use Jews as hostages in his planned negotiations with the Allies.

The period of massive Nazi-driven Jewish emigration culminated with the Anschluss of Austria in 1938, when Eichmann and his Jewish working partners accomplished wonders in arranging the departure of 126,000 Austrian Jews against the obstruction of much of the German bureaucracy and of nearly all the countries to which the Jews tried to emigrate. Famously, only a few minor Latin American countries and the Japanese-controlled city of Shanghai were open to Jewish immigrants.

The German attacks on Poland and the Soviet Union, as well as the entry of the United States into the war in December 1941, closed the door to emigration and presented the Germans with the dilemma of what to do with the millions of East European Jews under their sway. In conformity with their ideology, the Nazis devised a project for the extermination of all of European Jewry. Why that same ideology had earlier allowed the deportation of thousands of German, Austrian, and Czech Jews outside of the Nazis' reach is a question that not even Bauer seems to be able to answer.

The fact is that in March 1944, when Eichmann arrived in Budapest, the major part of the Final Solution was behind him: as the organizer-in-chief of the Holocaust, he had sent millions of German, Austrian, Czech, Polish, Slovak, Dutch, Belgian, Norwegian, and French Jews to their deaths, while the German army and police had exterminated most of the Jews in Serbia, Greece, the Baltic states, Ukraine, and other occupied Soviet territories. Hungary was to be Eichmann's crowning achievement, and he threw himself into it with gusto; but once again he left a door open to forcible emigration. Or perhaps he was ordered by Himmler to do so. In any case, it was Eichmann who, on April 25, 1944, summoned Joel Brand to his presence, offering to exchange a million Jews, to be sent to Spain, for some money as well as ten thousand heavy trucks, two hundred tons of tea, eight hundred tons of coffee, two million cases of soap, an unspecified quantity of tungsten, and other military-related material.

The absurdity of it all cried out to heaven: where were one million Jews to be found who were capable of traveling? How were they to be transported through France to Spain? The Nazis considered the route to the Near East and thus to Palestine unacceptable; as did, incidentally, the British. What would Spain and the rest of the world do with the Jewish arrivals, and, most important of all, why would the Allies give the Nazis the crucial military materials that Eichmann had requested?

Florence, Bauer, Braham, and many other scholars have struggled with the question of whether Eichmann was playing a game or whether he truly believed in the power of world Jewry to convert the Allies to his proposition. Or maybe he meant his offer to be a first step in the direction of a more realistic discussion. It could also be—and all our authors mention this possibility—that Eichmann's offer was but an excuse for a greater purpose: Himmler's plan to offer the Western powers an alliance against Bolshevism. After all, Eichmann had made it clear from the beginning that the trucks would not be used against the Western allies, and that they should be winterized for the Russian front. The answers provided by historians to these many questions are highly debatable. What is certain is that the Nazis lived in a dark dream-world: they failed to fathom the determination of the three great allied powers to fight the war until the total defeat of the Third Reich.

By the time Eichmann made his blood-for-trucks offer, the Gestapo and the organs of the SS had arrested or thrown into internment camps thousands of Jews and hundreds of non-Jewish, anti-Nazi Hungarians. The massive deportation of Jews from Hungary began on May 15. It was at this point that the vast differences became clear in the status of the handful of Zionist negotiators and the rest of the Hungarian Jews; and this caused a lasting Jewish suspicion toward Joel Brand and his colleagues. While even members of the Jewish Council—all well-known and respected leaders of the Orthodox, Conservative, and Neolog (or Reform) communities—had to wear the Star of David, Brand and company were exempted from the regulations. They wore no star, were free to use a telephone, to hail a taxi, to check into a hotel, to go to a restaurant. The Zionists could travel without risk of arrest at the railroad stations. For his flight to neutral Turkey on May 17, with the purpose of transmitting Eichmann's offer to the Allies, Brand was provided with a German passport bearing a Christian-sounding name, and a round-trip ticket to Istanbul in a German courier plane. (But the Germans forgot to secure, or to forge, a Turkish visa for him, which seriously delayed his further travel.)

The story of Brand's adventures, as well as that of the Zionists who remained at home, forms the essence of Florence's book. It reads both as an adventure yarn and a profound tragedy made up of hope, suspicion, fear, and confusion; all this against the background of the deportation trains leaving daily for Auschwitz. While not really trusted by the Jewish leaders in Palestine, Brand was deeply distrusted and soon imprisoned by the British authorities as a German spy. How to explain the British suspicions?

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The latent anti-Semitism of some British officials must have been one reason; another was their ignorance of the true extent of the European Holocaust. Yet the British were quite correct in believing that a good number of Jews were in the service of Nazi intelligence agencies: Brand's traveling companion, Bandi Grosz, also known as András György, was such a person, although he is said to have also been in the employ of Japanese, Polish, Hungarian, British, Jewish, and other secret services.

Both Brand and Grosz failed in their mission. The Western Allies were not willing even to pretend that they were taking Eichmann's offer seriously. This would have risked alienating the Soviets at a time when the help of the Red Army was most needed for the Allied forces in Normandy. Let us remember that two weeks after the Allied landing in Normandy, in June 1944, Operation Bagration, mustering 2.3 million Red Army soldiers, twenty-four thousand artillery guns, four thousand tanks and assault guns, and over five thousand aircraft, smashed the German Army Group Center, driving its remnants back to the Vistula in Poland. Had the Allies delivered even a hundred trucks to the Germans, Stalin might have ordered a halt to the Soviet offensive until the British and American troops were driven back to the sea.

Bandi Grosz, whom all sources describe as short and ugly, with protruding teeth and red hair—a veritable *Stürmer* caricature—was not even allowed, upon his arrival in Istanbul, to present his case. Yet his mission seems to have been to announce, first, that Hungary was prepared to leave the German alliance, provided that the Red Army would stop at the Hungarian border (another pipe dream), and second, that German SS agents were ready to meet with American intelligence agents to prepare a truce and a joint military campaign against the Soviet Union. His fate was to be imprisoned by the British in Syria. (Thereafter he faded from the scene and allegedly died in Munich in the 1970s.) But in the case of Grosz, everything, including his true name and true role, is a matter of speculation.

Brand himself went through many months of imprisonment near Cairo, a hunger strike, and sporadic meetings with British, American, and Jewish representatives. Released at last, he was not permitted to return to Hungary. Even after the war, he continued to believe that he would have succeeded in his sacred mission if only more officials had heard him out. In reality, it is hard to see how he could have achieved anything with his impossible assignment. All in all, the mind boggles at the thought of Brand, an habitué of Budapest coffee houses and a great card player, and Grosz, a convicted smuggler, approaching the great Western powers in the name of the high Nazi leadership: one to offer history's greatest extortion scheme, and the other a political, diplomatic, and military volte-face that, if accepted, would have forever changed the world.

II.

While Brand was away, the leadership of the Zionist Aid and Rescue Committee—and the affections of Brand's wife, the Zionist activist Hansi Brand—were transferred to Rezső Kasztner. He was the most controversial, and most successful, Hungarian Zionist. *Killing Kasztner,* a recent documentary film by the New York director Gaylen Ross, helps us to understand why Israelis both hate and revere Kasztner. Calm, highly attractive to women, self-controlled, contemptuous, often abrasive, Kasztner bravely faced danger both in wartime and in the postwar years. He dared to treat the SS officers as his equals; he defied the Hungarian officials who had arrested him trying to get some information on what the Germans were up to. (He was soon freed by orders of the Gestapo.) He befriended SS officers, especially Kurt Becher, with whom he visited nightclubs in Budapest, Vienna, and Switzerland, and on whose behalf he later wrote an affidavit to the Nuremberg international court. Some say that his affidavit was designed to prevent Becher's indictment and thereby the revelation of Kasztner's association with crimes that Becher had committed. Others prefer to see the affidavit as a decent gesture on behalf of a former friend. In any case, the affidavit became a strong reason for Kasztner's assassination in 1957.

In June 1944, Kasztner persuaded Eichmann to permit the emigration to Switzerland by rail of what finally became 1,684 Jews—as a gesture of goodwill toward the Allies, and as a source of rich profit for some SS officers. The way he selected the passengers became another point of accusation against Kasztner after the war. Yet it seems clear that, rather than being biased in favor of his family and friends as well as favoring the wealthiest Jews, the selection process was a chaotic affair over which Kasztner exercised limited control. Naturally, he put members of his family and some friends—though not himself—on the train, but the hundred-odd wealthy Jews whom he selected were obliged to pay not only for themselves but also for others. In addition, Kasztner's train contained Zionists, and Orthodox and Neolog community leaders, and Rabbi Joel Teitelbaum, the head of the bitterly anti-Zionist Satmar Hasidim, together with his family and court, and Polish and Slovak Jewish refugees, and several dozen orphaned children, along with many unknowns, including those who sneaked onto the train when no one was looking. There was no Zionist bias in favor of healthy young people, and most of the cost of bribing the SS was covered by international Jewish organizations. It is true that instead of being sent directly to Switzerland, the passengers were forced to spend several months at Bergen-Belsen concentration camp, but they were kept in a special compound for privileged prisoners. All of them survived the war.

Kasztner later claimed that he had also been responsible for the rescue of some twenty thousand other Hungarian Jews whose railroad cars had been disconnected on the way to Auschwitz and redirected to the family camp at Strasshof in Austria, where most of them survived. This might be true in part, but it seems that their ultimate "savior" was the SS security chief—and major war criminal—Ernst Kaltenbrunner, who, in order to please his fellow Austrian Nazis, ordered that twenty thousand deportees be dispatched to Austria for industrial and agricultural labor. In addition, Kasztner's most ardent admirers claim that the several hundred thousand other Hungarian Jews who survived should also be grateful to the memory of Kasztner—but marshalled against this claim are similar claims by the admirers of Raoul Wallenberg; the Swiss Consul Karl Lutz and other consuls of neutral countries; the Vatican legate Angelo Rotta; and the Hungarian Regent Miklós Horthy. One might even argue that the person ultimately responsible for the survival of several hundred thousand Hungarian Jews was Heinrich Himmler, which does not of course render this monster a good man. In any case, it is unlikely that the truth about all this will ever be known.

Besides being accused of having defended Kurt Becher and of filling his train with protégés and big payers, Kasztner was publicly accused, after the war, of having profited materially from his SS connections. This is a charge that was manifestly untrue. But the most devastating charge—aired in the Knesset as well as in newspapers opposed to the government, of which Kasztner was a member—was that, in order to have his train, Kasztner had agreed with Eichmann

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not to publicize plans for the deportation of all the other Hungarian Jews to Auschwitz. But as Bauer, Braham, and Florence all convincingly demonstrate, practically all the Jewish community leaders in Central Europe, and not only Kasztner, were aware of the unfolding of the Final Solution, especially after the arrival in Slovakia in April 1944 of two Jewish escapees from Auschwitz. The fact is that while their famous "Auschwitz Protocols" soon reached Western diplomatic representatives in Switzerland, neither the Jewish Council in Budapest nor the Zionist leaders tried to notify their fellow Jews in Hungary of the danger.

The reason for this could not have been Kasztner's "gentleman's agreement" with Eichmann. Rather, as all our historians believe, there was the impossibility of printing such a warning in the single Jewish newspaper that was permitted by the Hungarian authorities. Nor would the Jewish Council, made up of some of the country's most respectable and most successful citizens, advocate anything other than obedience and faith in the beloved fatherland, the regent, and the Hungarian authorities. And even if Kasztner had been able to reach those in the countryside, no one would have believed him, just as no one would believe the handful of young Zionists who somehow managed to travel from Budapest to some country towns in order to raise the alarm. And there would have been nowhere for the Jews to hide—so the counter-argument runs—in the generally flat, treeless, orderly, and anti-Semitic Hungarian countryside. It is true that the massive sheltering and hiding of Jews began only in the late fall of 1944, following Regent Horthy's attempt to surrender to the Soviet Union. On October 15, the SS arrested Horthy and put the leader of the extreme rightist Arrow Cross Party, Ferenc Szálasi, in power; all this while the Red Army was rapidly approaching. Now even Christians in the Hungarian capital had good reasons to fear the terror of the Arrow Cross hoodlums. But again, there certainly would have been some Christians, even in spring 1944, willing to hide, or even to adopt, Jewish children.

In the final analysis, it was wrong to make Kasztner responsible, as the right-wing press and politicians in Israel later did, for the tragedy of the springtime deportations. What greatly weakened Kasztner's status in the public eye was that he lied at the libel trial of one of his main journalistic accusers, in Jerusalem in 1955, about the affidavit he had given to the Nuremberg court on behalf of Kurt Becher, and that his lie was easily unmasked. Still, Judge Benjamin Halévy's opinion—written at the conclusion of the trial—that "Kastner had sold his soul to the German Satan" was grossly unfair. The judge's opinion was surely a factor in Kasztner's assassination. Kasztner's murderer and two accomplices were sentenced to life by an Israeli court, but they spent only seven years each in jail and became, for many, national heroes. Kasztner's rehabilitation by the Israeli Supreme Court in 1958 had no effect on public opinion.

No doubt, practically all the Jews of Hungary would have survived if the Hungarian authorities had refused to cooperate with Eichmann in the spring of 1944. This was a perfectly feasible option in view of the smallness of Eichmann's staff—less than two hundred persons, including secretaries. Yet noncooperation with the Nazis was far from the minds of the Hungarian bureaucrats, city officials, gendarmes, policemen, and the thousands of others involved in the great task of ridding Hungary of its Jews and acquiring their wealth.

The negotiations regarding the Hungarian Holocaust, one of Jewry's greatest catastrophes, often assumed the character of a tragicomedy. Its cast of awful and colorful characters would be incomplete without a brief depiction of SS officer Kurt Becher, who began his career as an officer in the Waffen SS and police units that massacred Jews and Poles in Eastern Europe. Later he turned to economic activity—that is, organized looting on behalf of the SS; and in spring 1944 he negotiated the purchase by the SS of most of Hungary's heavy armaments industry from its Jewish owners. He achieved this in return for some money and the flight of more than forty family members to Portugal in Lufthansa passenger planes, with Hungarian exit visas and Portuguese entry visas forged by the Germans. In this deal the Hungarian government was the main loser, because the SS property immediately became Soviet booty following liberation in the winter of 1944. It took some time for the Hungarians to retrieve what had been theirs. And while it is clear that Becher profited materially from the deal, it remains a mystery why he and the SS command spent so much energy acquiring industrial plants that within a few months would inevitably fall into Soviet hands.

After the war, and partly thanks to Kasztner, Becher suffered only a brief imprisonment and ended up as one of the wealthiest citizens of the German Federal Republic. But many of the Abwehr officers who had genuinely turned against Hitler and saved quite a few Jews were tortured to death by their rivals in the SS Security Service and the Gestapo. All this, and much more, is well told by Florence; he also establishes clearly, together with Bauer and Braham, that despite their modest successes Kasztner and the other Zionists achieved more in terms of lives saved than anything the Jewish Council in Budapest, the Jewish agencies in Palestine, and the Allies could claim to have done. It is conceivable that, in the very last months of the war, Becher, and behind him Himmler, would have given up even more Jews had the Western side proved less inflexible. "We can only speculate," writes Florence, "how many lives might have been saved if Britain and the United States had been willing to pursue serious negotiations, paying part or all of the modest sums the Germans were [at the last minute] demanding."

The convoluted story of the Zionist-SS negotiations might also answer a fundamental question: when outright resistance is hopeless, are negotiations with the devil a legitimate course of action? On the basis of the Zionists' experiences, the answer must be a tentative yes. I would not call their negotiations collaboration—the word implies the collaborator's fostering of the interests of the stronger country, whereas Kasztner's negotiations were intended only to benefit the Jewish minority. We must not forget that one side had at its disposal a vast machinery of terror while the other side could muster only a few million dollars painfully extracted from some Western sponsors. What they could muster as well was a lot of bluffing, and the uncanny ability to make themselves acceptable, at least to a certain degree, to ruthless men who had been trained to loathe them and to kill them. We should indeed pay tribute to the handful of Hungarian Zionists whose unjust postwar rewards were public humiliation, ostracism, and—in the case of Rezső Kasztner—death. ◆

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Washington Diarist

Playing Changes

"Here's how I play," John Coltrane remarked in an interview in 1961. "I start from one point and go as far as possible. But, unfortunately, I never lose my way." It was not long before Coltrane escaped the confinement of what he already knew, and made exploration itself into his highest value; but it must also be said that an ethic of unending exploration, a life of serial certitudes, may also be shallow and a mark of mere restlessness. There are many ways to be lost. (Coltrane at the end of his questing life certainly sounds lost to me. The master of *Crescent* revised himself out of beauty and even coherence.) I have nothing against adventure, obviously, especially when it is an expression of dissatisfaction with oneself; but sometimes one finds oneself where one really should be, in a rich and deep place that demands and rewards toil, within defensible limits, with justified beliefs, and the meretricious course would be to move on, to take one's instructions from the fickle world, to keep up. In our society, there is almost no greater apostasy than the refusal to keep up. Often this narcosis of the new, this unreflective centrifugality, is disguised as a high dream of transformation—as the courage to change. What about the courage not to change? The American adage that change is my friend is a catechism for people with little to lose, or who are panicked by the prospect of stillness. Transformation is often a gorgeous form of escape. Perhaps there is something more precious than the sense of possibility, and it is the capacity to actualize a specific possibility—to stay with it. One should always be more promiscuous in principle than in practice. There are small corners in which large things can be attained. Some years ago Harold Bloom wrote a glowing and uncomprehending review of a book I had written about a year in mourning, in which he wondered why I displayed so few "signs of change." "He departs pretty much as he arrives," Bloom complained. He was right. I was not born again. Being born once was mandate enough.

The tedium of steadfastness, about which Coltrane complained, is a trap also in political thinking. I have no defense to make of dogma, but there is a certain kind of mutability among political intellectuals that makes me nervous. There has been a lot of this in the Obama years, with the change in the weather. (Climate change!) Liberals who recently believed in the primacy of democracy and human rights in American foreign policy, and in the responsibility of American power to do good in the world, are suddenly realists who sagely explain why the United States cannot find a way to work with the Iranian dissidents but must find a way to work with Hamas and the Taliban. (From Obama's Darfur policy they simply look away.) I understand that this transformation is a consequence of the Iraq war, and I understand also why people may have changed their minds about the Iraq war. I myself wrote years ago that if I had known that there were no weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, I would not have supported the war; but I do not, for that reason, believe that the Iraq war has been a catastrophe for Iraq and its region, or that the Iraq war is all or most of what we need to know about America's role in the world, or that the Iraq war should be promoted into the primal scene for all subsequent American foreign policy. I do not like the fact that George W. Bush has had more influence on the direction of present-day liberalism than any present-day liberal. The formation of belief is a complicated affair. It must be active and reactive, philosophical and empirical. Political conviction cannot be indifferent to events, but not every event is an occasion for new thinking. For the articulation of principle, it should not matter who the president is. There are transformative events, but not many; and the frequent insistence upon the unprecedentedness of one's own time is evidence only of excitability. There is no need of breaking news for the purpose of arriving at one's fundamental beliefs. The study of history should suffice. It is a better guide for moral and political understanding than experience, which is commonly a narrowing influence, and certainly for those of us who enjoy the West's insulation from almost every enormity: when we are schooled only by our experience, we become trivial. In the lurid universe of the Web, moreover, with its ceaseless revolutions and emergencies, its sleek engines of volatility, steadfastness is an even more sterling virtue. The object of one's steadfastness is what tells most, of course: steadfastness in the cause of error or evil is a vice. Everyone has a right to change his mind. But a knack for turmoil does not enhance your intellectual authority. And breaking ranks just isn't what it used to be. Conscience is supposed to be an *in*convenience. If you were with Reagan during Reagan and with Obama during Obama, if you were for the Iraq war when it looked good and against the Iraq war when it looked bad, if somehow you were always at the cutting edge of every discussion, then you may have represented merely your moment.

A few weeks ago the painter Avigdor Arikha died in Paris. I knew him for many years and I loved him. He was one of my tutors in seeing. Away from his brushes and his pastels he was also a scholar, and a man of immense cultivation: I still recall my gratitude for what he heard in Schubert's B-flat Sonata or Britten's Third String Quartet. But here I wish to record his steadfastness, and to praise it. Avigdor changed—"Alberto, no more abstraction," he told his friend Giacometti in 1965, "I've started drawing from life and you were right"—once, and for good: thereafter the glory of his hand was owed not least to his mutinous unwillingness to evolve. He had no more periods. Instead he remained militantly faithful, for half a century, to optical experience, to the truthful recording of the phenomenal world. He was a hero of the eye. Immune to the seductions of contemporaneity, Avigdor came increasingly to feel, and to look, out of his time. He was not a revisionist, he was a refiner. When he found his field—the saga of perception, the vicissitudes of light as it met people and objects in space—he saw no reason to quit it. He mastered even his agitation—my friend was a stranger to serenity—by turning it, too, into a subject for veridical representation. Again and again Avigdor made beauty out of "the same thing"; but his work taught that finally there is no sameness, because the light always changes. Fortunately, he never lost his way.

Leon Wieseltier

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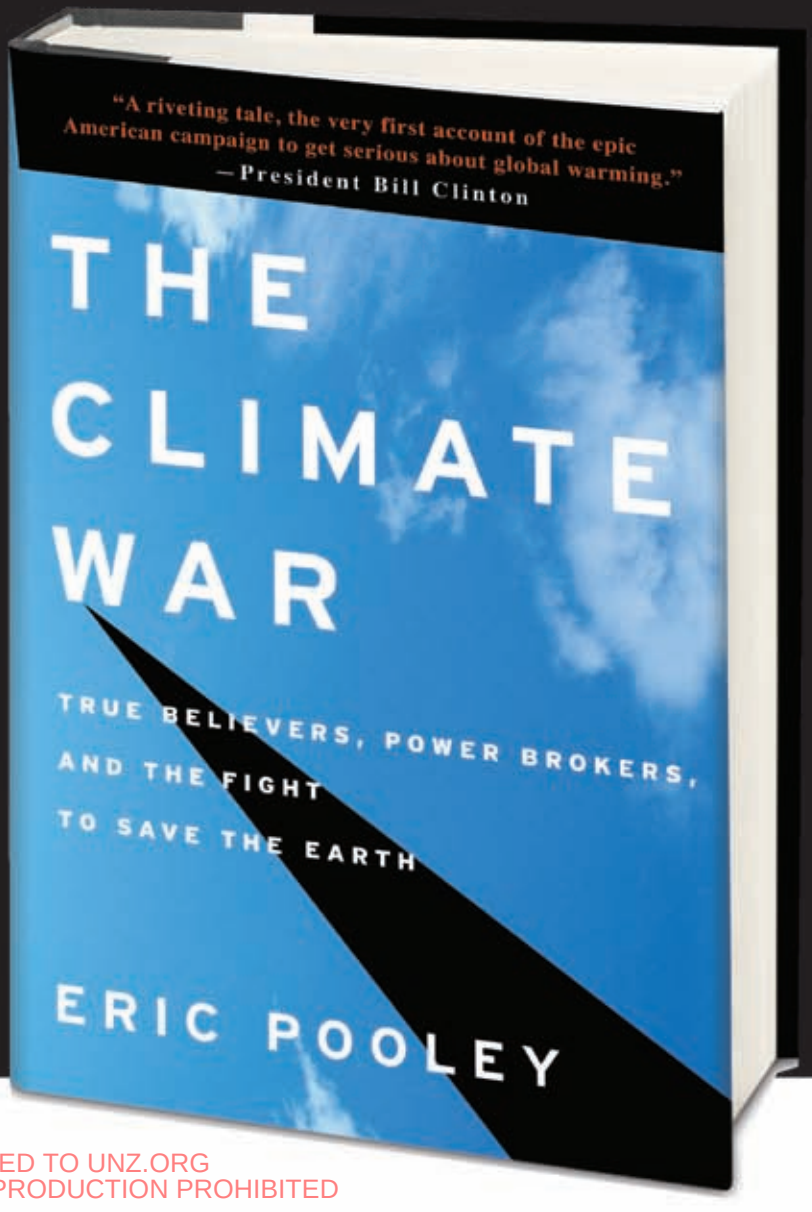
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